



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA

2021-22

OSO Annual Report

Promoting Equitable Fairness

Exploring the Work and Worth of
the Ombuds.



DECEMBER 15, 2022

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Introduction: Exploring the Work and the Worth of the Ombuds

What is the Value of the Higher Education Ombuds at the University of Alberta? (uab.ca/ombuds)

The first step to knowing the value of a higher education ombuds is to learn how to pronounce and spread the name to others over a conversation: Om-buds or Om-buds-person. We are not omnipotent but we are an important resource on campus for everyone. Yet, many do not know what we do, and we believe it is because we are a confidential and impartial service and much of our needed work flies under the radar. We are the team that works with students daily when they are frustrated and upset dealing with numerous problems. This includes academic issues such as: grade appeals and appealing academic withdrawals; non-academic allegations of cheating and plagiarism; complaints about bullying, discrimination and harassment; peer classroom and lab conflicts, and conflicts with your professor or supervisor; and any other issue that affects the quality of your academic and personal life on campus. We offer guidance and support in our area of expertise and have close connections with many support units for referral. We help students to find their agency. To answer what is the value of the Higher Education Ombuds you need to first ask what is the value of fairness at your institution? We are not legal advocates; rather, we are advocates for fairness: in all university procedures (procedural fairness), in university decisions that affect your standing as a student (substantive fairness); in the way you are treated on campus (relational fairness); and consideration of your social location (equitable fairness).

The Office of the Student Ombuds or OSO stands at arm's length in the Dean of Students portfolio, providing advice and referrals for students, student groups, faculty and administration on university policies and procedures. Our goal is to find the best possible resolution in a timely way abiding by the rules and regulations of the University of Alberta, unless we find impediments and structural barriers in these processes. We do not have power to make decisions; however, we have the power of moral suasion to make recommendations on gaps and omissions, and biases (even if they were unintended), and we offer to collaborate with institutional partners using education to correct errors and remove barriers. Your university ombuds can be a first point of contact for a concern, not a last resort, as we strive to help with earlier resolutions where your voice is heard.

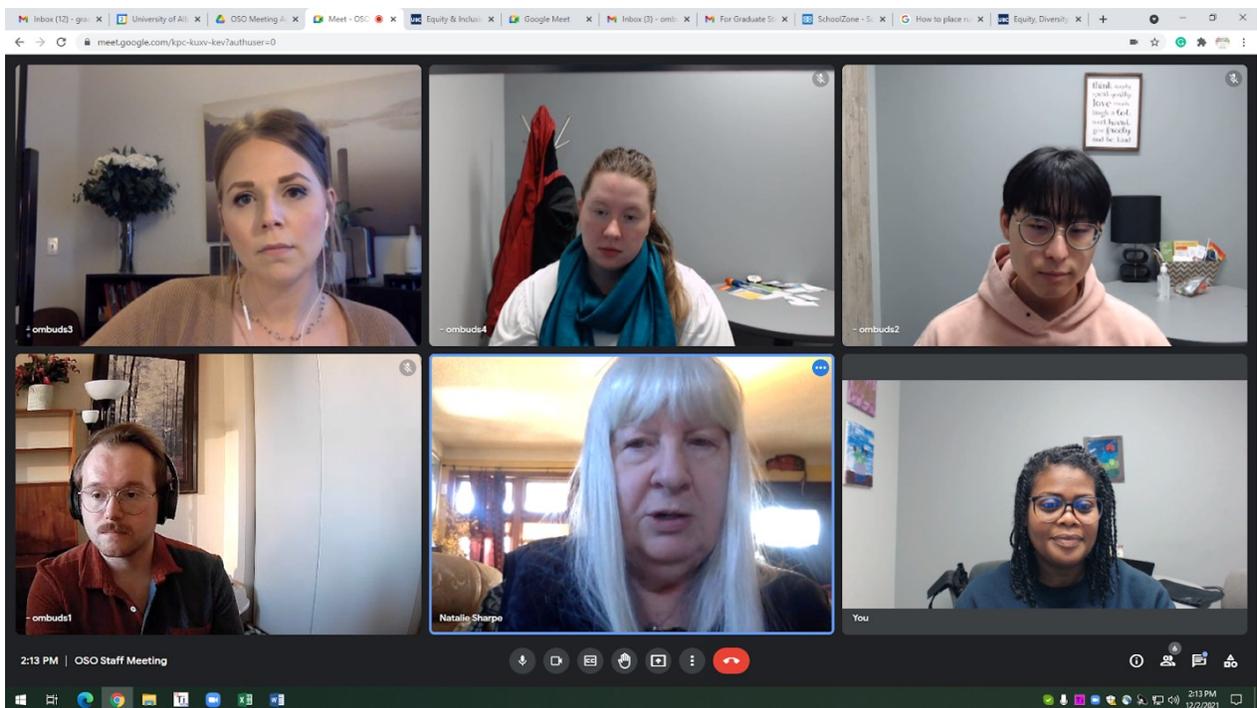
Are you starting to see the value of having an ombuds at your institution? At an international ombuds conference in the fall of 2021, Natalie Sharpe, Director of the OSO, with a national colleague (Carolyn Brendon, McMaster U) and an international colleague, Jean Grier (VP, ENOHE) gave a session on “Higher Education and the Bottom Line: How Much is an Ombuds Worth?” Here is one of our arguments. “Simply Establishing an Ombuds Office Communicates that it is Safe to Bring Forward Concerns. Ombuds offices are inherently credible because they are uniquely Independent, Impartial and Confidential. Because of the Ombuds’ confidentiality, stakeholders are comfortable disclosing sensitive concerns to the Ombuds, allowing them to act as an Early Warning System and Safe Disclosure or Whistleblowing channel when appropriate, thereby mitigating institutional liability and reputational damage. Because Ombuds are outside the hierarchy reporting only to the highest levels and are not decision-makers or compliance officers, they can build trust across constituencies allowing them to resolve issues quickly and fairly at minimal cost to the institution.” (presented at ACCUO/ENOHE joint virtual conference September 2021). So the formula for what an ombuds’ worth might be: “Independent + Impartial + Confidential = Credible”. (ibid) As you can see, the OSO continues to work hard in its current reporting relationship, but ideally, a HE ombuds works at its best when it is truly independent, reporting to the decision-makers. After reading this report, debate on whether your ombuds creates value for your institution.

For more information on the work we do to help students find their agency, and for faculty and staff consultation, check our website at uab.ca/ombuds.

Another Year of Remote Delivery Anticipating a Move to Hybrid

This was another year of remote delivery with planning toward hybrid delivery. Staff meetings were held twice a week for wellness check-ins, to discuss orientations and presentations for faculty and staff, and casework conundrums. We adjusted our appointments to meet across time zones at a convenient time for both parties. Formal investigations and hearings continued to be held remotely, with consideration to students’ locations. OSO staff received notes of appreciation from students because of the staff’s prompt responses and assurance while waiting for important decisions, preparing for the next stage of their appeals, and/or discussing options regarding the outcome of their appeals. Despite being familiar with the virtual routine, we still could see students struggling with loneliness and anxiety, especially if it was their first year as a student (undergraduate, graduate, transfer, international) and especially for those who

had returned on probation. We watched closely and responded carefully, ensuring that we referred them to the wellness supports on campus. Often students, including our staff, spoke of their longing to return to the classroom, and missing the social life of campus and class breaks with their classmates as well as student group and recreational activities. Student staff expressed how important it was to check in with their student client's wellness at each meeting. Students were still coping, but their situations varied. For students who already experience marginalization, the barriers increased and their situations became even more exacerbated with rising costs, and failing technology. Despite the University having a rescue plan with computers and financial assistance, many students were anxious that more technological problems would arise around exam time. Students became increasingly worried about how long this pandemic would last, and its impact on their grades, their degrees, and their future, in general. We focused on tracking every instance of a contact, not just cases, and our statistics grew to reflect the constant inquiries and interactions with the OSO.



Above: The OSO team working remotely: Top Veronica, Laurel, Hasul
Bottom: David, Natalie, Remonia

Notes of Appreciation from Students: 2021 – 2022

Thank you, for helping me in every step of the way through this process. I really appreciate your efforts.

You really helped me, I'm unsure what the outcome would have been if I didn't have your support and the resources you provided me. I'm beyond grateful :)

Hey! I am very happy to say my appeal got approved!!! Thank you so much for helping me through this process!!

Thank you and thank you for helping me so much in my hard time.

Thank you for attending my meeting with the associate dean, I felt comfortable speaking and presenting my case knowing that you were there with me.

I am writing this email to thank you for your help. You helped me so much although this was a very busy time of the year for ombuds, thanks again for your time.

I just wanted to thank you very much for all your help, advice, and knowledge in this stressful process.



ACCUO

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
OMBUDSPERSONS

ACCUO's First Virtual Conference and Ombud 101

Most Canadian higher education ombudspersons belong to the bilingual Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO/AOUCC), and adhere to a Professional Standards of Practice: **Independence, Confidentiality, Impartiality, and Accessibility**. An active list:serv provides consultation and diverse perspectives as we advocate for institutional accountability through best practices. We have active committees on: communications, international relations, awards, and equity, diversity and inclusivity. Due to the inability to meet in person since 2019, we hosted our first virtual conference in February 2022 and invited members across Canada. Many of our international Higher Education ombuds colleagues participated.

ACCUO also offered its first Ombuds 101 seminar: introduction to ACCUO; Natalie Sharpe, President of ACCUO, provided an introduction to the history of ACCUO and the work of its various committees. There was also a panel of long-serving ombuds practitioners to talk about the challenges and rewards of Higher Education ombudsing. The following day-long conference included four presentations from our OSO staff: "Online Proctoring: Integrity, Equity and Fairness" (David Draper); "Independently Connected and Impartially Biased: Overcoming Oxymorons in Ombudsing Practice" (Veronica Taylor & Laurel Wilkie); "Multipartiality: An Essential Foundation for Equitable Fairness" (Remonia Stoddart-Morrison & Natalie Sharpe); "Making the Most of the Courage to Act Project for Ombuds" (Natalie Sharpe interview with Deborah Eerkes, University of Alberta). For further information on this organization, refer to accuo.ca

International Networks of Ombuds in Higher Education

As institutional members of ACCUO, the OSO staff were able to engage with international colleagues through free and low-fee webinars. For example, in September 2021, ACCUO co-hosted a conference with the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE). Staff also attended a virtual, admission-free, one-day conference with the California Caucus of College and University Ombudspersons and discussed special ombuds topics with American ombuds colleagues. ACCUO members were also invited to the first Ombuds Day session hosted by the University of Moncton ombuds that was offered in French and English (translation). These have been important learning opportunities for the interns to meet and dialogue directly with higher education ombuds of diverse backgrounds and practices. They discussed the common challenges we see in higher education globally, with an ombuds focus on best institutional practices to promote fairness, transparency, and accountability. There were two international presentations this year: the ACCUO-ENOHE virtual conference in September 2021, “Higher Education and the Bottom Line: How Much is an Ombuds Worth?” (Carolyn Brendon, McMaster U; Jean Grier, VP, ENOHE; Natalie Sharpe, Pres ACCUO); and the Cal Caucus conference in Pacific Grove, California in November 2021, “Multipartiality: An Ombuds Technique for Achieving Equitable Fairness” (Kimberly Jackson Davidson, Oberlin College; Natalie Sharpe, UAlberta).

University Ombuds Staff 2021-2022

Natalie Sharpe, Director of the OSO



“While directing the OSO in a remote world anticipating a move to hybrid delivery, I continued my role as the President of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (6th year). It was a busy year with managing caseloads (two to three times higher than other PSEs of similar size). It is important to acknowledge the important connection that students made with our team members (because we model a practice of relational and equitable fairness). It was also critical to find ways to fulfill the team’s thirst for continuing professional development. Instead of feeling completely alienated through remote work, our team saw ways to engage in new and exciting modes of professional development that had not been affordable before. I believe this helped us keep closely connected to our student clients, as our staff wanted to reflect the latest teachings of best ombuds practices learned through discussions with colleagues across the country, sharing our experiences of working through a pandemic. As a result, not only did we survive another remote work year, but we also thrived as a community of practice regionally, nationally and internationally. Our staff kept close ties to our Alberta colleagues and our neighbouring colleagues in BC, as well as our national

organization. I also found that faculty were calling the ombuds more frequently not about cases specifically but more about fair practices to remove barriers for students. It was an interesting year as there were many requests for collaboration on proactive information and education sessions with FGSR and some of the professional faculties. I delivered “Module 5: Conflict Management and Resolution in the Supervisory Relationship” for FGSR. In addition to directing the office, I collaborated in the delivery of a session in the ACCUO/European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education virtual conference on the value of an ombuds in higher education; a joint presentation with Kimberly Jackson Davidson, an esteemed ombuds colleague from Oberlin College (USA) at the CalCaucus Ombuds Conference on “multipartiality” as an effective equitable practice tool in ombuds work; presenting in the first virtual ACCUO conference and Ombuds 101 session on the History of ACCUO, and co-presenting on “multipartiality” with Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, and an interview with Deborah Eerkes on how can ombuds be involved in the Courage to Act project in their daily work with clients, as we work with both complainants and respondents.” Natalie received an ACCUO Recognition Certificate for her work on the ACCUO executive, and international HE ombuds colleagues, and various ACCUO presentations.

Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Graduate Ombudsperson



“We began the year working remotely so all our meetings with students occurred over one of the online platforms (Google Meet/Zoom/Skype/Telephone). As we had been doing this for about a year, I had now settled into this practice. Working with students

facing issues with the added barriers that the pandemic brought, highlighted further the inequities that equity-seeking students face at the university. This opened up opportunities to prepare materials and deliver educational sessions to both students and faculty that focused on equity, conflict management, bias and discrimination. The sessions provided to students included: Identifying and Addressing Biased and Discriminatory Behaviours and Managing Difficult Conversations in Your Practicum. The sessions provided for Faculty included: Nursing Practicums Best Practices in Student Feedback; Getting to Know our Biases: How Self-Awareness Supports Equitable Action as well as the Conflict Management and Resolution in Supervisory Relationships which was a part of the Supervisory Development Program offered by FGSR. The goals of these workshops were to promote an understanding of early resolution; provide students with an understanding of their rights and the agency they have to advocate for themselves when these situations arise; provide faculty the opportunity to reflect on their practice and consider best practices that will ensure fairness and equitable treatment for all students. The journey from admission in a program to convocation can be a challenging one, especially for graduate students and medical residents within the university which is mainly due to the complex and unique needs they have. These are unique because these student share a closer, longer working relationship with other university members such as supervisors. These kinds of relationship, because of their closeness, tenure and high stakes can prove challenging to manage. Throughout the year, the focus was on continuing the work with students by providing support that will help to successfully build and maintain these relationships from inception to departure from the university. This entailed ongoing conflict management coaching with students as well as the facilitation of restorative sessions which has proven useful in helping participants (peers, lab colleagues, association members, students and faculty) repair harms that have been caused, rebuild the relationship and trust in each other as well as enrich the working environment they share. Towards the end of this reporting year, I transitioned from the role of Interim Graduate Ombudsperson to Graduate Ombudsperson to continue the work of ensuring fairness and equity for the graduate student and medical resident populations of the university.” Remonia co-chairs the Dean of Students EDI Committee, and serves on the ACCUO EDI Committee. ACCUO honoured Remonia for these contributions with a Recognition Certificate.

Veronica Taylor, Interim Undergraduate Ombudsperson



Veronica Taylor became the Interim Undergraduate Ombudsperson in February 2020. “ As the Interim Undergraduate Ombudsperson, a large portion of my work involved meeting with and advising undergraduate students impacted by a variety of academic and non-academic issues. As students returned to in-person classes and practicums, and on-campus activities, this included advising students impacted by both inter-personal (e.g., student-instructor), and intra-personal conflicts (e.g., conflict of personal views and external requirements). Through the ombuds lens of fairness, I assisted students in navigating these situations in ways that aligned with their primary goal of meeting their academic and work responsibilities within the structures of the university.

In addition to working directly with students, I collaborated on a number of training-development projects including the development of a graduate supervisory conflict management and resolution module for academic supervisors in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. In collaboration with the Faculties of Nursing and Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation, and members of our ombuds team, I also developed and delivered seminar-style trainings for students and faculty members. These trainings were tailored to faculty-identified needs, and covered a variety of topics including: how to navigate personal biases while striving for equity, how to identify and address biased and discriminatory behaviours, how to approach difficult conversations with practicum supervisors, and best practices in student practicum feedback. This collaborative work supporting members of our campus community was an exciting and valuable new branch of our office’s commitment to promoting fairness and equity at the University of Alberta.” Veronica was awarded a Recognition Certificate for her presentation at the ACCUO Virtual Conference in February 2022.

Mentoring Interns – OSO Senior Staff Reflections



Above: OSO team meet in park

Left: OSO Winter Wellness Festivity Lunch



The OSO undergraduate and graduate internship program builds and hones students' ombuds skills incrementally via mentoring, shadowing, case debriefing, and supervision/feedback. "The key aspects of the mentoring program are: mentorship (learning by instruction and example); shadowing (learning by observing senior ombuds); debriefing (learning by reflection) of examples (an opportune time to focus on cues to cultural nuances, etc); skill-building in alternative dispute resolution (communication and conflict resolution skill roleplays)" (uab.ca/ombuds)

Natalie Sharpe:

"The seventh year of intern ombudsing in a second year of remote delivery demonstrated the tenacity and resiliency of our internship program team in teaching, learning mentoring, and reflective practice. We have a robust training schedule based on learning modules and resource information in our Office Handbook supplemented by an Intern Manual (both revised annually). Along with the inhouse training modules, we encourage practice through roleplaying. Interns also participated in a number of Dean of Students units' sessions to ensure their work is informed by the latest training on sexual assault awareness and trauma-informed approaches, as well as suicide awareness and prevention. They are also trained on cultural and gender sensitivities to practice equitable treatment of clients. We hold two staff meetings per week, and this year, an orientation to meet and greet new ombuds at a safe outdoor park setting during the summer, and our only indoor gathering for our season's winter dinner. We were a determined team, checking in routinely on each other's health and wellness. There were definitely challenges in our lives; despite vaccinations and masking protocols, the pandemic began to hit many of us in our homes at family gatherings as government rules were relaxed. Team members covered each other's tasks as we took time to heal and recover in our secluded realities. The "ombuddy chat" was not only a place to share important work information but also to check in, send warm wishes and share special home remedies (that offered a recipe with "ginger") to heal sore throats and foggy minds. Health and wellness were the goal, and we were now accustomed to our remote meetings, scheduling alternative times to meet our students, faculty, etc. The reality of having a physical workspace seemed so distant to us, and we had to check in frequently to ensure that the loneliness of remote work was not having any adverse effects, especially on our interns. We met all special requests for special one-on-one meetings through the internal Ombuds' chat. The interns took special interest in working with the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) to engage in various sub-committees: EDI, Communications, International Relations, the new International Ombuds Book Club, as well as ACCUO' first Ombuds 101 training session and virtual conference. Interns participated in the first virtual summer California Caucus of College and University Ombudsperson's conference. The staff engaged in

professional development and supplementary training whenever offered, when fees were waived or minimal because of the pandemic. “

Remonia Stoddart- Morrison:

“Training sessions for our new interns (2021 – 2022) started online as we were still operating remotely. I was fully comfortable with the online platforms to engage and interact with interns so as to assist them in successfully transitioning in their roles as ombuds. Ombuds interns occupy different spaces, that of a student and an ombuds, and with that can come the challenge of separating the two while drawing on the experiences of each to inform the other. Interns were invited and encouraged to reach out as often as they needed through online chat, virtual meetings or telephone to ask questions, have discussions and debrief cases. These chats, calls and meetings provided them with the help they needed to navigate these spaces so that they are able to provide appropriate support for the students they work with.

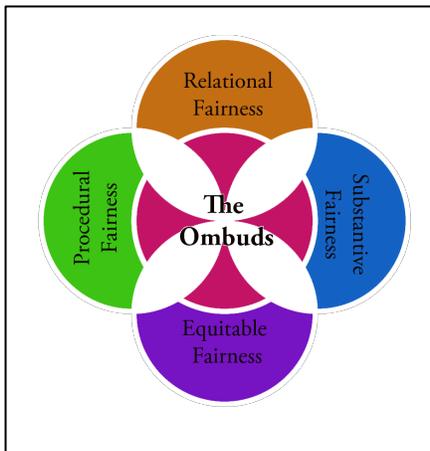
We returned to campus for a few days each week midway through this reporting year which offered the opportunity for us to interact in-person with interns. We had a few social engagements which allowed us to get to know each other a little better. More specifically, I was able to add another dimension to mentoring that I was not able to do in the previous year, that of facilitating in-person and virtual presentations with the Graduate and Undergraduate Ombuds Intern. Through facilitating these education sessions together, I was able to guide the interns into an understanding of the importance of providing information through which students can empower themselves. This is further linked to promoting early resolution which involves engaging graduate students before a concern or a conflict.”

Veronica Taylor:

“My work as Interim Undergraduate Ombudsperson over the 2021-2022 year also involved training and mentoring our amazing undergraduate and graduate interns. In addition to training interns on the key tasks and overarching fairness lens of ombuds’ work, we endeavored to support each intern’s unique interests and ambitions in order to provide a meaningful internship experience tailored to their future academic and career goals. From my own experience as both an undergraduate (2015-2016) and graduate (2020-2021) intern, the mentorship of new interns has always been a top priority and key contributor to both quality ombuds practice, and a tight-knit and supportive office ‘family’ within the OSO.”

Ombuds Interns 2021 – 2022

David Draper, Undergraduate Ombuds Intern



Circle of Fairness (by David Draper)

David is an undergraduate student studying Political Science and had previous experience on the Students' Union executive, and various University committees. "Throughout my internship I was given the opportunity to work with a variety of students from all walks of life and help them understand the rights and responsibilities they have as University of Alberta students. This process pushed me to strengthen my communication skills and ensure I had a fulsome understanding of the policies, procedures, and possibilities at the University.

The wide array of case types and unique circumstances allowed me to always find an opportunity to learn or grow on a daily basis during the internship. In addition to the daily activities of the office, I was also able to take part in work with ACCUO, our federal organization. Through ACCUO I was given the opportunity to work on developing a conflict of interest and procurement of contracts policy, I was able to work with Ombuds from across Canada to plan a national conference, as well as present on topics of interest at two different conferences. The pedagogical value of my internship with the Office of the Ombuds cannot be understated. The internship has set me up for success in many ways, and was a consistently welcoming, inclusive, and engaging experience.” For all of his voluntary work with ACCUO, David was awarded a Recognition Certificate for his technical leadership and participation in the planning of the virtual ACCUO/AOUCC conference in February 2022; his presentation at the conference, his work on the International Book Club Planning committee, and his participation on the EDI committee. David was also a co-presenter at the Alberta Student Leadership Summit with his ombuds intern peers on advocating for fairness.



Hasul Kim, Undergraduate Ombuds Intern

Hasul is an undergraduate student studying Psychology, and had previous experience on student committees. “I had the pleasure of being an undergraduate ombuds intern of 2021-2022, and it has been an exciting year with great opportunities for my personal development in a lot of new fields I did not have much prior exposure to. I gained a lot of in depth knowledge about our university policy and how the different departments operate to create a fairer and safer environment across the campus. It was fascinating to learn about the different roles and responsibilities of an Ombudsperson, and I got to see how involved we are across the campus and how closely we work together with the various departments and faculties to serve our staff and students. I had a chance to interact with several clients who each brought unique and complex circumstances, and I learned how to equip them with the appropriate knowledge to guide them through different university processes. I learned the different ways to practice impartiality to uncover the best possible resolution. Being an ombuds intern taught me that practicing impartiality was the best possible solution for assisting our clients as it frees us from our tendency to develop stereotypes and biases, and allows us to view situations more objectively. As I worked closely with students in confidential settings, I learned the value and importance of building students’ knowledge of their rights, and their capacity to act to ensure that they are heard. In feedback from my clients, they showed me why the services at the Office of the Student Ombuds are essential and beneficial to all students.” Hasul co-presented with David Draper and Laurel Wilkie at the Alberta Student Leadership Summit on how to advocate for fairness using the ombuds fairness lens.



Laurel Wilkie, Graduate Ombuds Intern

Laurel is a Master's graduate student in Educational Policy Studies specializing in Adult, Community, and Higher Education. She has a background in Residence Life at various institutions and a passion for student support. "My internship with the OSO has allowed me to make a meaningful impact on students' experiences at the university while broadening my understanding of fairness and equity at the institution. Each student that accesses the OSO has a unique social location that requires an attention to detail and level of care on part of the ombuds so that we may best support the student. Each individual case also allowed for a deeper reflection on fairness and equity due to how they uniquely applied to each individual case in different ways. This critical reflection allowed me to become more cognizant of my own biases and how I can strive to uphold impartiality and independence better within any role moving forward. My understanding of the university's policies, as well as the breadth with which they may be applied, helped me communicate with students regarding what information may be important to include so that they may best advocate for themselves. Not only was I able to build strong connections with the other folks in the office, but I had the opportunity to network with national, as well as international colleagues, through our strong ties to various ombudsing organizations. The other interns and I had ample opportunity to get involved with these organizations in various ways, such as through different committees or conferences. Additionally we were able to present at the Alberta Student Leadership Summit to students across postsecondary and the K-12 system across Canada on advocating for yourself through a fairness lens.

The team is incredibly supportive and encouraging to the interns to explore new areas and make as many opportunities for growth in this role as possible. I could not be more thankful for this opportunity as not only has it been invaluable to my professional journey, but I feel as though the connections I have made with the passionate people here are ones that I will carry with me moving forward.” Laurel was awarded the ACCUO/AOUCC Recognition Certificate for her presentation at the ACCUO virtual conference, her work with the International Book Club Planning Committee, and her work with the ACCUO EDI committee.

OSO Activity Summary: 2021 – 2022

- Fairness Day on Campus was promoted remotely with the DOS Communications Group (special thanks to Debbie Yee)
 - Relational Fairness Video (posted on website)
 - Ask an Ombuds (6 video shorts posted on DoS Instagram)
 - Ask the Ombuds a Question Live (Zoom)
- OSO conducted 33 Education and Orientation workshops (virtual)
- Attended 1478 (1057+421) client-associated meetings outside of the office (mostly virtual)
- Attended 32 formal appeal hearings (virtual)
- Engaged in 11 Alternative Dispute Resolution processes
- Workshop for Transition Year Program, First Peoples' House
- Workshop for International Student Services
- GSA Workshop for Election Candidates: Handling Conflict during the Elections
- FGSR Ethics & Academic Citizenship Training YouTube Videos (x2)
- FGSR Supervisory Development Training Module: Conflict Management & Resolution in the Supervisory Relationship
- Faculty of Nursing:
 - Nursing Practicums: Best Practices in Student Feedback (Faculty)
 - Getting to know our biases: How self-awareness promotes equitable action (Faculty)
 - Identifying & Addressing Biased & Discriminatory Behaviours (Students)
- Faculty of KSR: Managing Difficult Conversations in Your Practicum
- Workshops on Conflict Resolution/supervisory relationships in several departments
 - Rehabilitation Medicine - Conflict Resolution (x2)
 - Modern Languages and Cultural Studies - Introduction to the OSO and Conflict Resolution
 - History, Classics & Religion - Graduate Student-Supervisor Relationships
 - Computer Science - Student's Rights & Responsibilities. Where to Go for Help
- Presentation at Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Council Meeting on OSO Report 2020-2021
- Restorative Sessions (x3: each consisting of multiple sessions)
- Participation in 10 International HE webinars (Europe, California, Australia, Africa)
- Participation in 4 virtual conferences (joint ACCUO-European Network of Ombud in Higher Education; California Caucus of College and University Ombuds Summer

Virtual Conference; Alberta University Student Summer Conference; ACCUO Virtual Conference)

- Presentation at one on-site conference California Caucus of College and University Ombuds
- Participation in ACCUO virtual Western Regional Meeting/Training hosted by Vancouver Community College
- Participation in 2 Alberta Network of Ombuds in Higher Education Virtual Meetings
- ACCUO 101 Presentation (ACCUO Presentation on Getting to know ACCUO)
- ACCUO Conference Presentation (x3)
- Alberta Leadership Summit Presentation (Interns)
- Allyship Activities on Orange Shirt Day and Pink Shirt Day.



Orange Shirt Day

Above: Remonia Stoddart-Morrison

Demographics of OSO: 2019 – 2022

Case activity remained steady; the number of academic offence allegations reduced to half, consistent with the prior year. Academic cases increased substantially as there were more RTWs, more consistent with the year prior to the pandemic when many RTWs were reconsidered.

Reporting Years Comparison (Apr 1 – Mar 31)	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 - 2022
Clients	1320	1498	1438
Undergraduate	1008	1170	1236
Graduate (includes Med Residents and Postdoctoral fellows)	307	296	198
Others (parents, admin, outside inquiry)	5	12	4
International*	522	547	466
Domestic	758	918	938
Residence Status Unknown	44	77	34
Contacts and Visits	2568**	6996**	14274***
Average Number of Visits per Client	2.0	3.5	2.0
Issues***	1573	1761	1600
Academic	786	435	820
Conflict	165	177	121
Academic Offence	455	1011	496
Non-Academic Offence	34	13	25
Discrimination/Harassment Allegations	42	35	50
Miscellaneous	91	90	88
Activities			
Investigative Meetings	362	926	421
Committee Meetings	154	863	974
Formal Hearings	31	31	32
Informal Resolution/Appreciative Inquiries	6	6	11

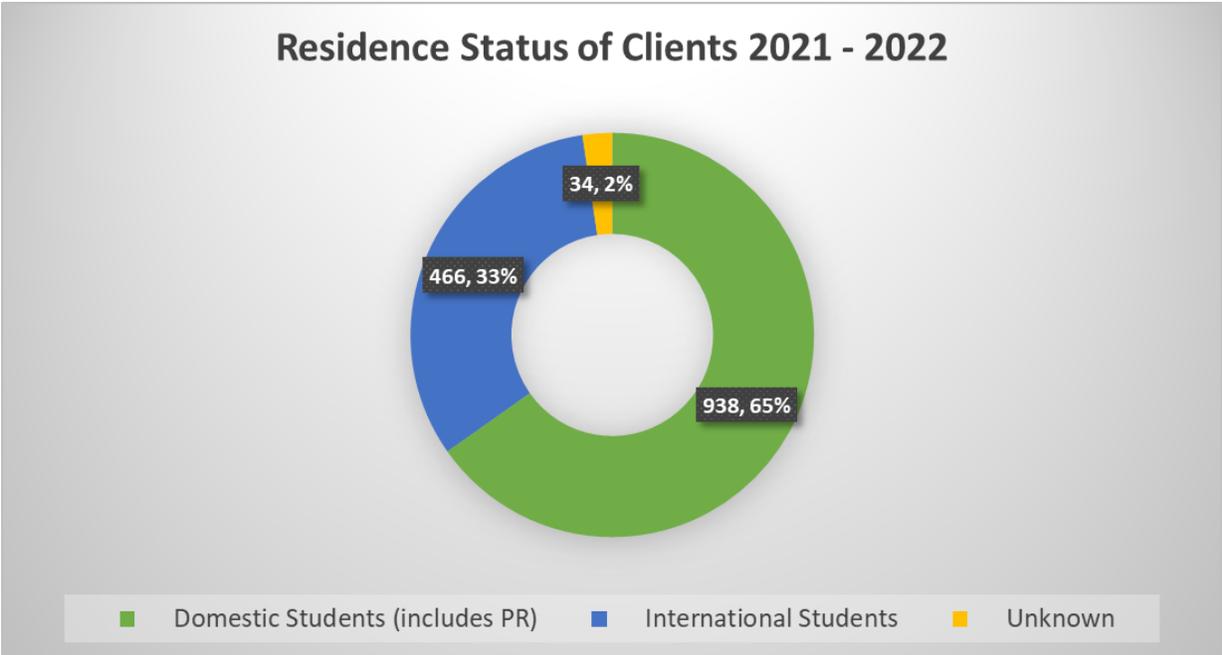
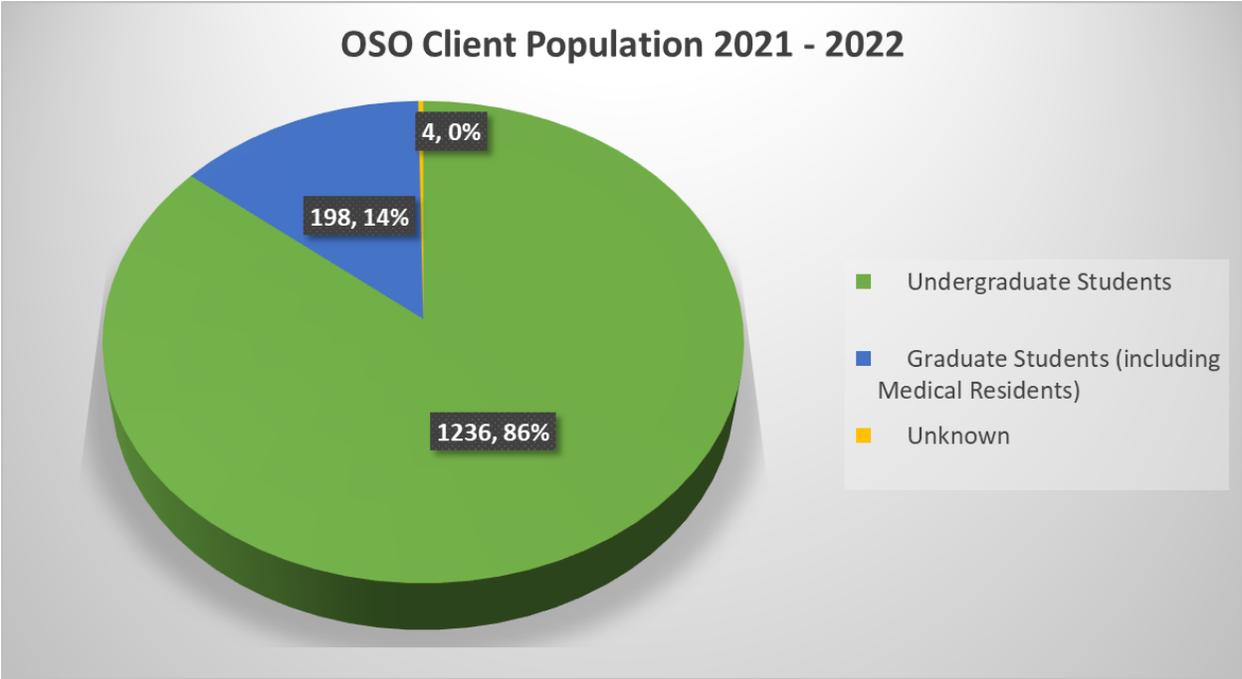
** International students are a smaller portion of the total student population, yet the relative proportion of international student visits far exceeds those of domestic students.*

***Contact hours are typically scheduled for 1 hour but may vary from ½ hour (RTW) to 2 hours. ***Clients may have more than 1 issue.*

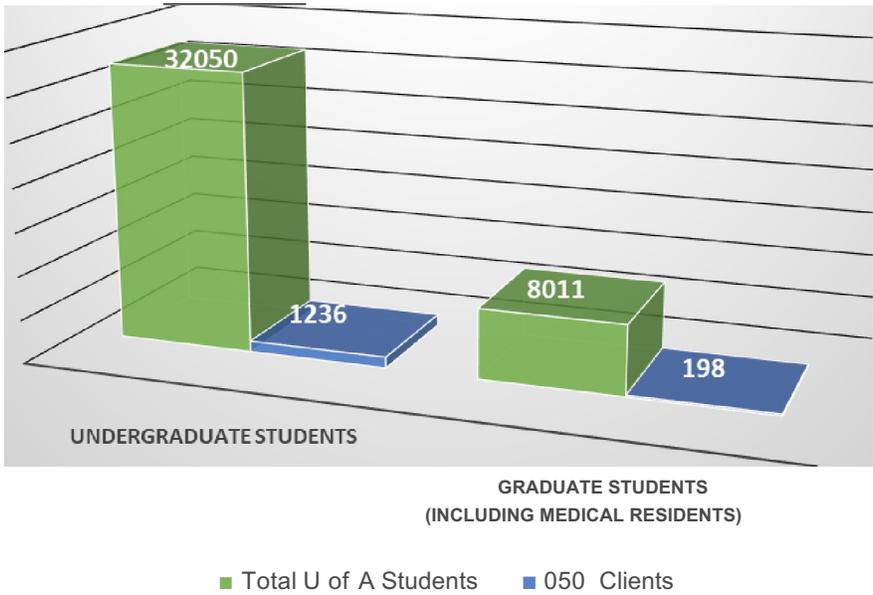
***** This increased significantly while working remotely, as we focused on tracking each contact with students including meetings, emails scheduling and responses (not just the meetings).*

Glossary: Academic includes required to withdraw (academic standing), grade appeals, exam deferrals and re-examinations. Conflict may involve interpersonal, supervisory, student-professor conflicts. Academic Offence includes plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation of facts. Non-Academic Offences include online bullying, discrimination, different forms of harassment and inappropriate behaviours. Discrimination/Harassment allegations related to sex, gender, racial, disability, family status discrimination, duty-to-accommodate violations. Miscellaneous includes residence conflicts, etc.) Investigative Meetings are those that include the instructor, chair, Associate Dean, Discipline Officer, Protective services meetings related to an allegation; Formal Hearings are Formal University Administrative Tribunal Hearings (i.e., the various university appeal boards); Informal Resolution, e.g., Conflict Management Coaching, Mediation, Appreciative Inquiry

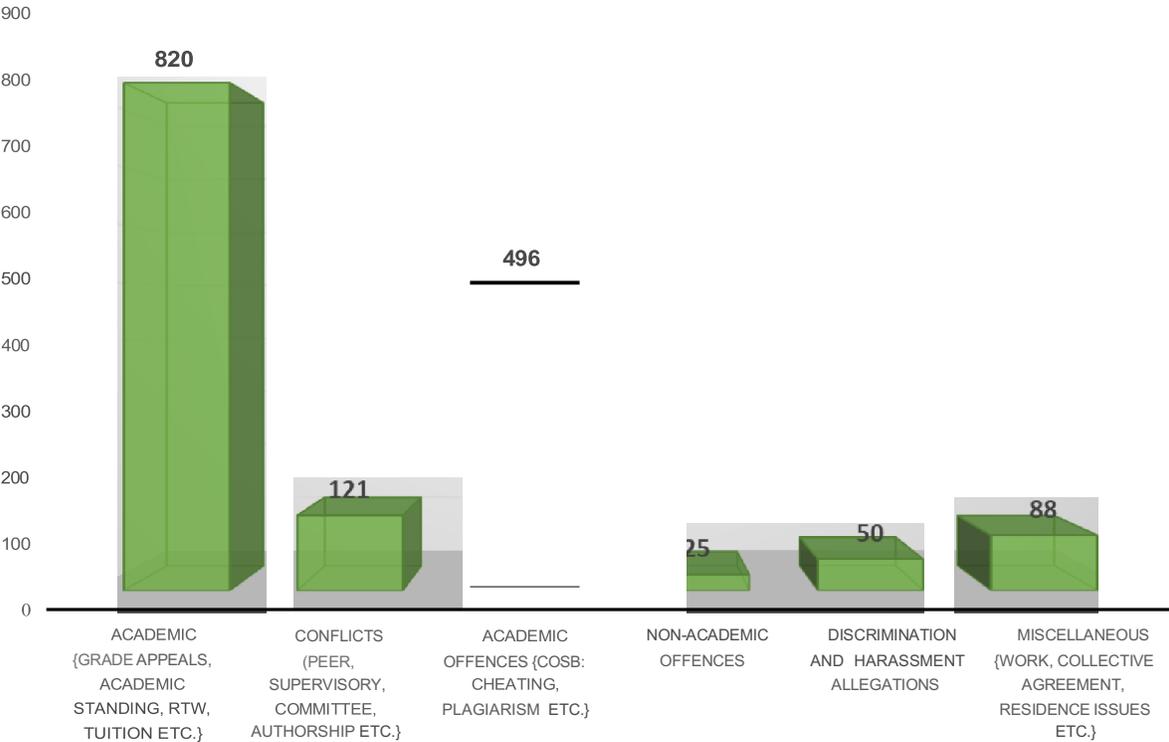
Graphs/Charts



050 Clients 2021 - 2022



OSO Cases/Issues 2021- 2022



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2020 – 2021

RECOMMENDATION ONE: The OSO recommends to the Dean of Students and University Administration, the importance of the expedited implementation of the OSO strategic plan to ensure the office is able to perform its functions effectively by adhering to the professional Standards of Practice of Canadian Higher Education ombuds.

- **Response:** The OSO maintains that the Terms of Reference reflected in this strategic plan will strengthen the OSO capacity to deliver the highest quality of services to the University community. This recommendation will continue to be carried forward to 2022-2023 as it is critical for the OSO's mandate and ToR to be aligned with the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudsperson's Professional Standards of Practice which include Independence, Confidentiality, Impartiality, and Accessibility. This strategic plan will enhance the OSO's visibility within the University community.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: In collaboration with the Dean of Students, Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) Associate Deans (or designates), the OSO will promote the visibility and availability of ombuds services for Augustana and CSJ students. Concretely, the OSO will bring attention to the need for all university websites and brochures for the OSO as well as university appeal and complaint processes to be made available in French for CSJ students. In collaboration with the Dean of Students and the AD of Campus Saint-Jean, provisions should be made to provide ombuds services in French.

- **Response:** This has not been implemented but will be a continued recommendation for next year. The OSO continues to support students from Augustana and Campus St Jean through remote meetings.

RECOMMENDATION THREE: The OSO, along with its professional organization the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) and its EDI committee, will work closely with Indigenous, EDI and Anti-Racism initiatives to champion best practices and inform service delivery. The OSO will strive to engage its staff in self-reflective training to increase sensitivities around culture, gender, sexual diversity, ableism, family status, class and other factors that create not only systemic barriers but directly contribute to the intersectional oppressions faced by our clients.

- **Response:** The ACCUO EDI sub-committee conducted a survey which looked at the capacity of ombuds offices to address issues of EDI on their campuses. The survey's recommendations and best practices were highlighted. As a result, the OSO facilitated several workshops and presentations with both faculty and students. The OSO staff continue to engage in training on personal reflection of their own biases to create an equitable and just office culture.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: The OSO recommends that FGSR and GSA continue to develop course modules and training to promote excellence in graduate supervision and supervisory relationships.

- **Response:** The OSO worked closely with FGSR and produced three training modules: namely FGSR Ethics & Academic Citizenship Training YouTube Video – Academic Integrity & Plagiarism, FGSR Supervisory Development Training Module: Conflict Management & Resolution in the Supervisory Relationship. The OSO continues to be a non-voting member on FGSR committees helping to provide a fairness lens to proposed policies and procedures.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE: The OSO recommends that professional faculties work closely with offices such as the OSO, Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights, First People's House, and International Student Services, Accessibility Resources, and student groups to develop and deliver training sessions and modules in conflict management and resolution, early intervention for practicum conflicts, feedback best practices, and other professional issues in these programs to enable student success.

- **Response:** With the challenges of working remotely, we were unable to consult with all these units. However, we collaborated with International Students Association to facilitate a Facebook live presentation. Additionally, in response to several faculty requests, the OSO provided tailor-made workshops covering areas such as bias and discrimination, feedback on best practices and conflict management and resolution. In an effort to promote early intervention and resolution, these workshops/presentations, in addition to facilitating restorative sessions, were employed.

RECOMMENDATION SIX: The OSO is committed to Continuing Work on Hybrid Delivery of Ombuds Services and Improving Remote Delivery to ensure continuing high quality of service. This includes adding modules to our training of interns to ensure they are able to work with ease in transitioning to different modes of delivery. This will be done in collaboration with CMT DoS Re-entry Plan.

- **Response:** The OSO has continued with a hybrid model of service delivery as it is believed that the health and safety for staff and students is still a priority for continuity of the service. As noted, the OSO does not have sufficient office space to adhere to safe practices working closely with students. This way, we are able to deliver high quality services with adequate staffing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2022 – 2023

RECOMMENDATION ONE: The OSO recommends to various stakeholders, including Dean of Students and University Administration, the need to expedite the implementation of the OSO strategic plan. This recommendation has been in our annual report for the past three years.

- **Rationale:** Work towards implementing the OSO Strategic Plan must begin to demonstrate the independence and transparency of the OSO in serving its clients, following the ACCUO Professional Standards of Practice. The plan provides a rationale and a comparison of three Canadian HE institutions with strong ToR that adhere to the ACCUO guidelines. The view of the OSO is that our work is more aligned offices such as OHDR and HIAR, and that an ombuds office should not be limited to students alone. We see strong models of ombuds offices in Canada that serve faculty, staff and students. The University has shown its commitment to the need for an ombuds since the early 1970s; however, the ombuds office has evolved in an arbitrary, ad hoc fashion. The role of the ombuds needs to be examined in how it can best serve the entire University community and have a higher profile and independence.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: The OSO continues to promote the visibility and availability of ombuds services for Augustana and CSJ students. One example of commitment would be to provide OSO information and university appeal and complaints processes in French for CSJ students. The OSO therefore promotes in collaboration with the Dean of Student and the AD of CSJ, the provision of ombuds services, appeal hearings, and appeal information in French.

- **Rationale: The OSO sees this as an equity issue.** As the OSO supports students from Campus St. Jean, we believe that it is important to enhance the equitability and accessibility of the service to these students. One way to do this is to provide OSO materials in their spoken and written language (French).

RECOMMENDATION THREE: The OSO promotes a continuing hybrid model of onsite and remote delivery to increase accessibility to its clients as aligned to our ACCUO Professional Standards of Practice.

- **Rationale:** The OSO has found that certain services such as remote meetings outside general office hours provide more accessibility for students. We also

have found that remote university appeal hearings provide more safety and comfort for clients than late hour appeals on campus. This also cuts expenses for evening hearings (food/beverages and protective services surveillance). This also helps to increase OSO staff safety as we can reduce the number of staff members in the office and on campus at late hours during the week.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: The OSO, in collaboration with professional and graduate faculties, recommends more restorative practice sessions with special focus on equity, diversity and inclusiveness. The OSO in collaboration with other units on campus will promote earlier restorative practice sessions, as requested.

- **Rationale:** These sessions were provided through special faculty requests this year to address peer-to-peer conflict (lab group & student groups/associations) where EDI issues were a main factor for the conflict. We hope to expand these offerings to promote early resolution; our work has demonstrated a greater possibility for mutually agreeable options to be identified and explored when concerns and conflicts are addressed early. OSO will collaborate with other units on campus that are promoting earlier resolution through restorative practices as requested.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE: The OSO recommends continued development and facilitation of presentations and workshops addressing EDI issues and the promotion of EDI in all of our presentations and collaborative work with departments and faculties, student associations and as a self-reflective practice in the ombudsing profession.

- **Rationale:** EDI-focused presentations and workshops have been offered this year to the Nursing faculty and we are hoping to offer these to other professional faculties such as Rehab Med, FoMD, Education, Pharmacy, etc. These sessions will be promoted with DOS Comms and tailored to the specific needs of the departments and faculties as identified by instructors, students, and other faculty members, eg, associate deans. The promotion of EDI practices will also be reviewed in our case debriefings, demonstrating self-reflective practices in EDI, and also in our participation in professional development activities focusing on EDI.

RECOMMENDATION SIX: The OSO promotes the initiatives of the new Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Advisory Council and will collaborate in all its initiatives as an advisory member.

- **Rationale:** Because of our ongoing casework with complainants and those accused of SGBV, it is critical for OSO to continue to provide advice and feedback on the policy, training, and communications as drafted by the new SGBV Coordinator, to ensure that the policies implemented promote safety as well as fairness to involved parties.

A Sampling of OSO

Workshops/ Presentations: New Visuals for Presentations

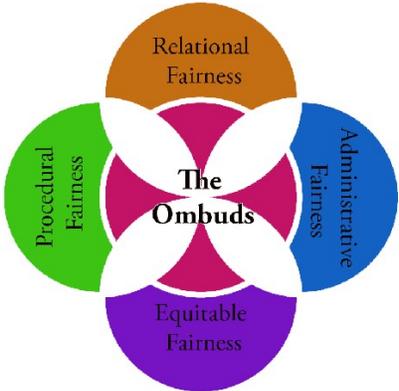
Getting to Know ACCUO/AOUCC



AOUCC
ASSOCIATION DES OMBUDSMANS
DES UNIVERSITÉS ET COLLÈGES
DU CANADA

ACCUO
ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
OMBUDSPERSONS

Natalie Sharpe, President, ACCUO
Ombuds 101, February, 2022



Multipartiality: An Ombuds Technique for Achieving Equitable Fairness

**Cal Caucus Asilomar
November 2021**

Co-Presenters:

Kimberly Jackson Davidson (Oberlin College)
Natalie Sharpe (University of Alberta, Canada)



Higher Education & the
Bottom Line:
How Much is an Ombuds Worth?

**ENOHE -ACCUO Virtual
Conference September 2021**

*Presenters: Carolyn Brendon (McMaster U),
Jean Grier (ENOHE), Natalie Sharpe (ACCUO)*

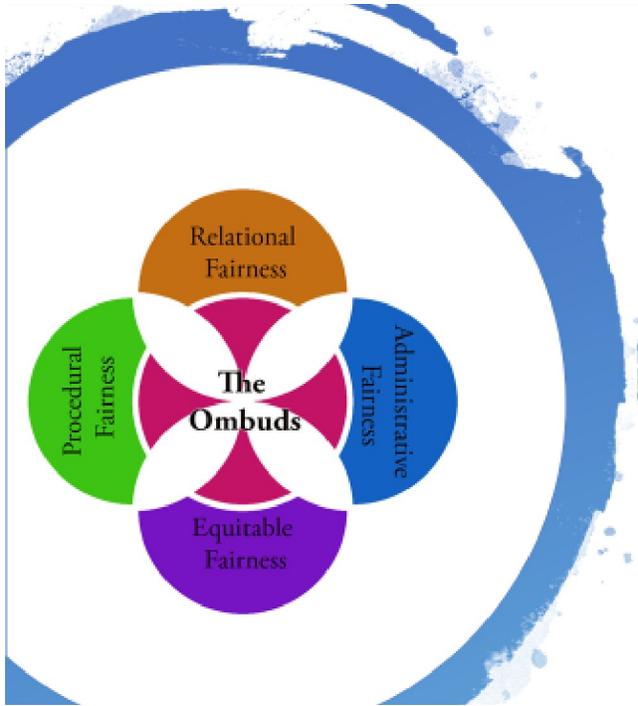
Faculty of
Graduate
Studies +
Research

SUPERVISORY
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM

Building a culture of growth in graduate supervision

Module 5.0
Conflict Management and Resolution in the Supervisory Relationship

Natalie Sharpe, M.A.
Director, Office of the Student Ombuds



Nursing Practicums Best Practices in Student Feedback

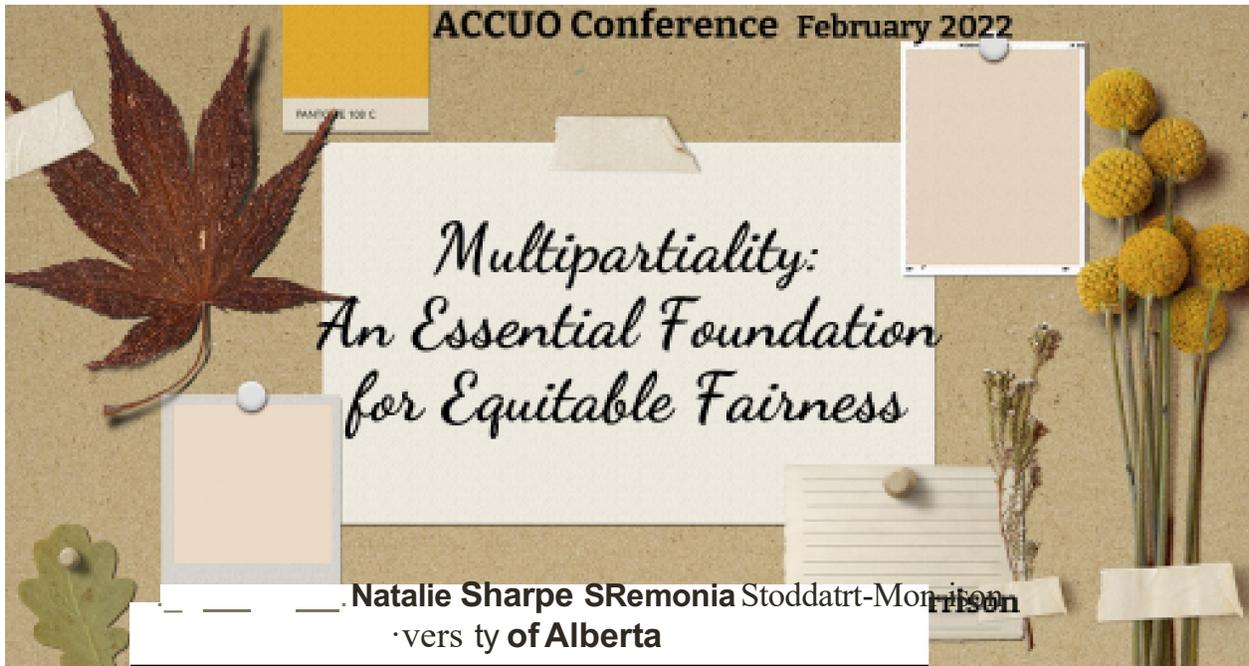
Office of the Student Ombud
 Octob@r2021

Presenters:
 RMionla Stoddart-Morrison and veronkaTaylor

Writers:
 Natalie Sharpe, Iternonia Stoddart-Morrison,md Veronica Taylor

Managing Difficult Conversations In Your Practicum

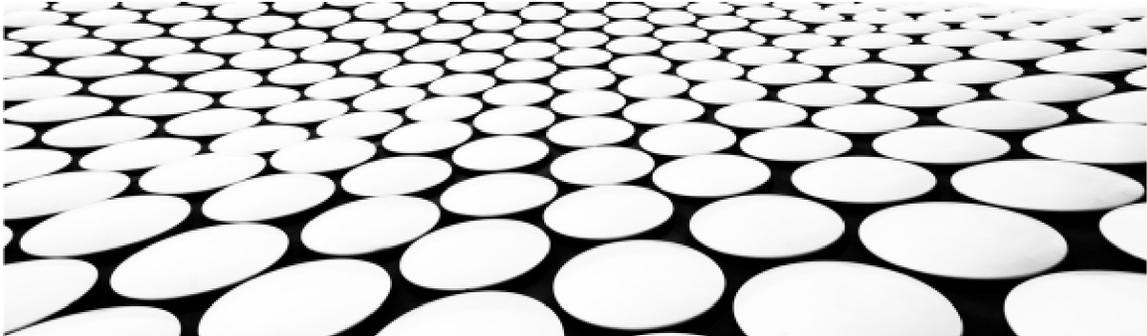
Presenters:
 Veronica Taylor & R morria stoddart-Morrison
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CONSTRUCTIVE: COMMUNICATIONS

GSA ALL CANDIDATES MEETING

FEBFWAI1Y2022



PRESENTERS: REMONIA STODDART-MORRISON & LAUREL WILKIE, OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS

Office of the Student Ombuds

Students Rights and Responsibilities: Where to Go for Help

April 30, 2021

Dr. Rita Stoddart-Morrison, Interim Graduate, Outreach & Inclusion
Vuun Sharmill, Undergraduate Ombudsman (2020 - 2021)
Office of the Student Ombuds
University of Alberta

Getting to Know Our Biases:

How Self-Awareness
Supports Equitable Action

Presenters: Remonia Stoddart-Morrison & Veronica Taylor
Office of the Student Ombuds

Online Proctoring

Integrity, Equity, and Fairness

David Draper (They/Them)
Undergraduate Ombuds Intern,
University of Alberta Office of the Student Ombuds.

Identifying and Addressing Biased and Discriminatory Behaviours

Presenters:
Veronica Taylor & **R** **emonia Stoddart-Morrison**
Office of the student **Ombuds**

Annual Report written and compiled by Natalie Sharpe; thanks to the OSO staff, especially Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, for their assistance with information, statistics, charts and biographies. Thank-you to the DOS Communications.

Inquiries/Comments: **ombuds@ualberta.ca**