



OSO Annual Report 2020 – 2021

Promoting Equitable Fairness

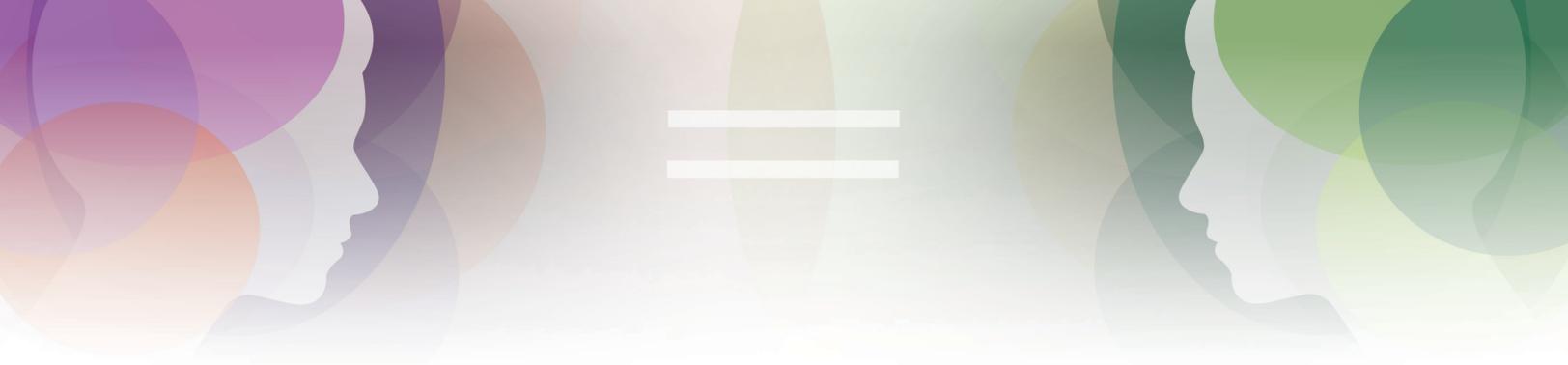
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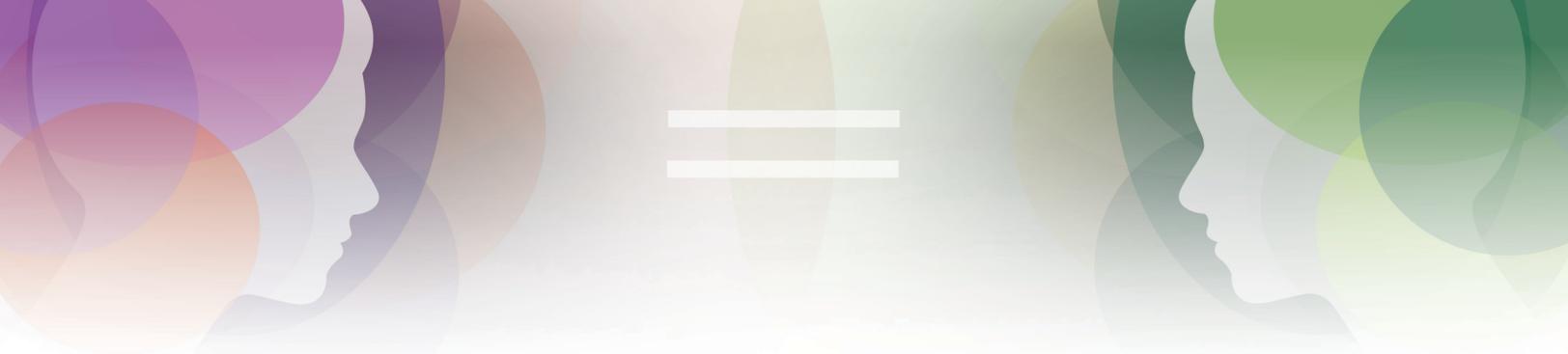
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Contents

Introduction—A year of Remote Delivery	3
What have students told us this year?	7
A Pandemic Nation—Keeping Ties with our ACCUO Colleagues across Canada	9
A Global Pandemic—Strengthening our Ties to HE Ombuds Internationally	10
Ombuds Staff 2020–2021	11
Mentoring Interns	14
Interns	15
Ombuds Activity Summary 2020–2021	19
Demographics of OSO 2019–2021 (3 years)	21
Graphs/Charts	23
OSO Recommendations and Responses 2019–2020	25
OSO Recommendations and Rationales 2020–2021	27
Sample of OSO Workshops/Presentations	30



Introduction

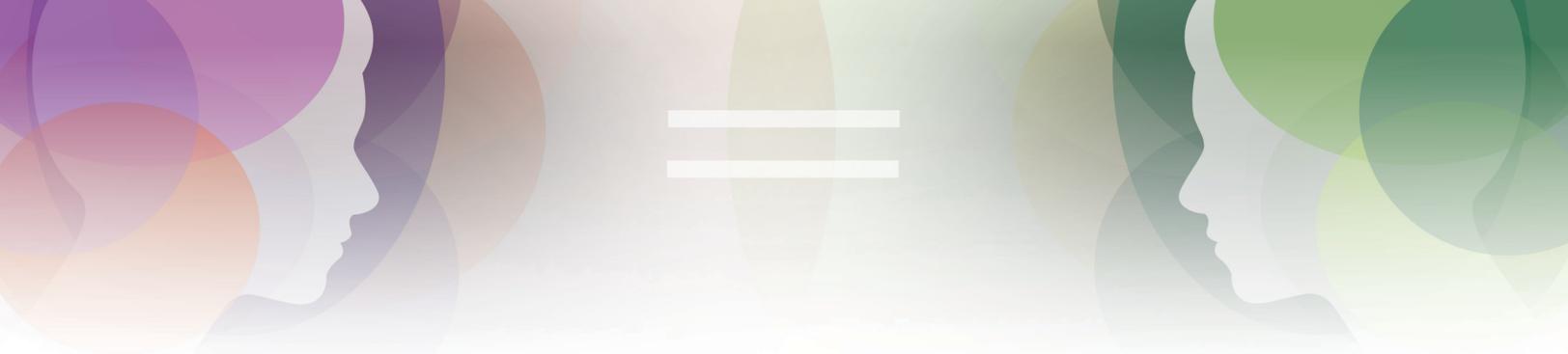
The Role of the Office of the Student Ombuds

uab.ca/Ombuds

The Office of the Student Ombuds stands at arm's length in the Dean of Students portfolio, providing advice and referrals for students, student groups, faculty, staff on university policies and procedures. Our work with clients covers academic, discipline, interpersonal, and financial issues related to student programs. As impartial advocates for fairness, we work with students to ensure that university processes operate as fairly as possible. Our goal is to find the best possible resolution within the rules and regulations of the University of Alberta. To accomplish this, we also look at impediments in these processes and make recommendations to ensure equitable practices for university students. As ombuds we do not have the power to make decisions; however, we make recommendations based on gaps and omissions, and unintentional or unforeseen biases in university policies and practices.

Our casework with our clients is confidential, but there are limits to confidentiality: 1) if there is a likely risk of harm to self or others, or 2) reporting or action is required or authorized by law. As Ombuds, we are not legal advocates, however we are advocates for procedural and substantive fairness (i.e., due process), relational fairness (respect and dignity of the parties), and equitable fairness (recognizing institutional barriers to one's social location). We state: "we are not your voice, but we will advocate for your voice to be heard". We focus on empowering our clients to speak to their circumstances and what they need for resolution. In collaboration with the students we serve, we strive to find alternative, informal, restorative resolutions whenever appropriate, to expedite an earlier resolution. We are dedicated to practicing allyship with those who face personal and systemic barriers on our campus.

On our website, you will find the various resources we provide to help you find resolution and manage conflict, prepare formal documents and provide support at formal appeal hearings. We also offer students, faculty and administration a number of education workshops on our areas of expertise, and work with faculties to provide input on fair and equitable practices.



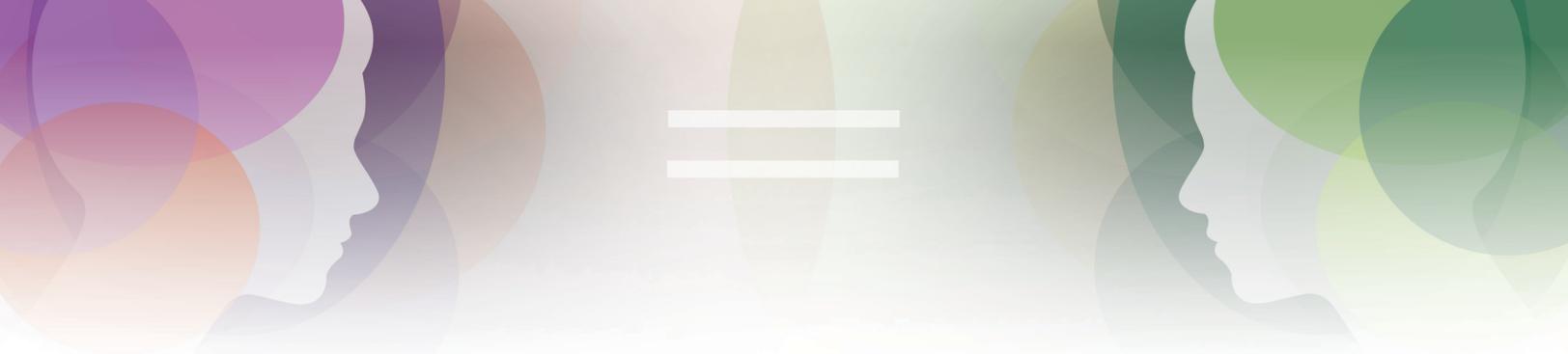
Promoting Equitable Fairness: A Year of Remote Delivery

Although this was an unusual year for our office, we focused on being flexible and adaptable in our work with students. This allowed us to meet the challenges of working remotely with clients, and protect the wellness and productivity of our team. We held virtual OSO staff meetings twice a week, and began each meeting with a wellness check-in to maintain team connections despite the isolation of the remote work environment. We continued as many activities as possible, including mentoring and supervising new interns as part of our internship program, delivering remote presentations, and attending virtual conferences and training workshops.

This pandemic year highlighted the exacerbation of equitable fairness issues among students. This was in part due to the many technological and personal challenges that students faced in remote course delivery, especially during exam invigilation. The inconsistencies and flaws of exam surveillance methods dramatically increased student anxieties and instructor workload. Our numbers of students charged with academic misconduct rose this year because of the particular challenges and disadvantages faced by many.

Many of our international students had returned home, so we increased the flexibility of our working hours to ensure that the time we met was mutually beneficial. Students shared their loneliness and anxious moments with us and we listened. We recognized the importance of our role in this lonely, remote world. The ombuds did not judge them. The ombuds listened and followed them to understand their social location, through a multipartial lens, examining whether they had been treated with dignity and respect (relational fairness) and whether their social location was acknowledged and considered in making decisions (equitable fairness).

World events continue to shape and inform our ombuds practices around equity, diversity and inclusiveness. The harsh realities of racism, sexism, colonialism, impact the lives of university students daily, and we found more need for students to share their lived experiences openly with the ombuds given the impartial, non-judgmental, and confidential nature of our work.



We noted the importance of this in the following message on our website:

Message to Students

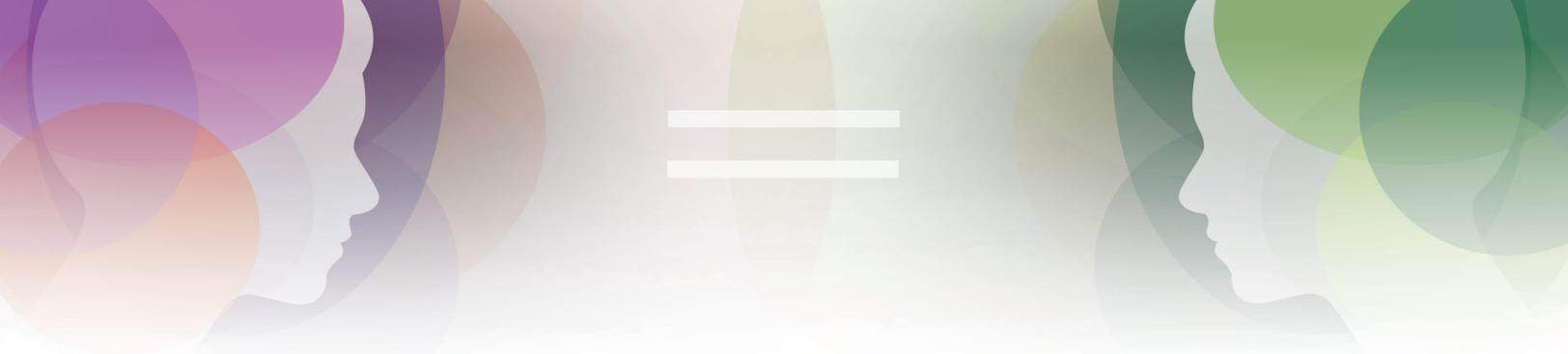
The Office of the Student Ombuds understands that students of colour experience anti-Black racism and other forms of systemic racism and discrimination in differing ways in our institution. As an ombuds team, we are committed to bringing to light all forms of discrimination that students experience and holding the university accountable in addressing these inequities. We work collaboratively with all university units in providing educational awareness and consciousness-building with respect to issues of privilege and marginalization in society.

We act to support students who face racism and discrimination by working with and strengthening them in:

- *Knowing their rights;*
- *Ensuring their rights are upheld;*
- *Ensuring that their voices are heard;*
- *Making them aware of the available options to curtail discriminatory treatment and deal with systemic issues;*
- *Connecting them with support resources to recover from the effects of racism and discrimination.*

We further acknowledge that racism and discrimination are experienced by other marginalized groups and will act to similarly support these students.

Although our client base is primarily students, we have always responded to faculty, administrators, and public inquiries on generic issues, but never on a specific case due to our standard of confidentiality.



One of the services that we offer to students who are experiencing conflict with their professors, supervisors and peers, is Conflict Management Coaching (aka conflict coaching). Typically, this is frequently offered to graduate students; these are one-on-one meetings to teach practical skills in communication strategies. In addition to individual appointments, we also offer education sessions on topics such as “Resolving Supervisory Conflicts: Resolving Group Project Conflicts”; and any topics that may be requested by students and faculty, tailored to their needs. As ombuds, we are always focused on Best Practices to ensure fairness to students.

In the past, we have responded to community education requests for conflict management training. Although we did not receive any requests this year, we have kept busy devising new modes of delivery education on conflict management and restorative practices suited for higher education, in particular with upcoming initiatives in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.



What have students told us about their interaction with the OSO during this pandemic? 2020–2021



Thank you soooooo much for today Veronica. I really appreciated having you there with me today. I was so scared I couldn't get any words out. Thank you thank you thank you.



Hello Remonia, Good Evening. My clinical instructor has informed me that I have now passed the course. I want to thank you for all your help throughout this experience. Your help and support really made a difference and I am very grateful. Thank you so much.



I would like to formally thank you for the entirety of your support during the appeal process back in May. I don't know whether or not you ever received an update on the outcome, but I am happy to inform you that it was a successfully upheld one!



I just wanted to say a sincere thanks again for your excellent facilitation of today's meeting. I really appreciate your kind and supportive manner!





“

Thanks very much, Remonia! As of this morning, I've sent the letters to both Associate Deans and one said he'll get back to me in a few days. In the interim, thanks very much for your help and assistance. Your support means a lot, and I'm very grateful for your input.

”

“

I just wanted to say thank you for your help in dealing with my case yesterday. I really appreciate the time you took to make sure that it went smoothly.

”

“

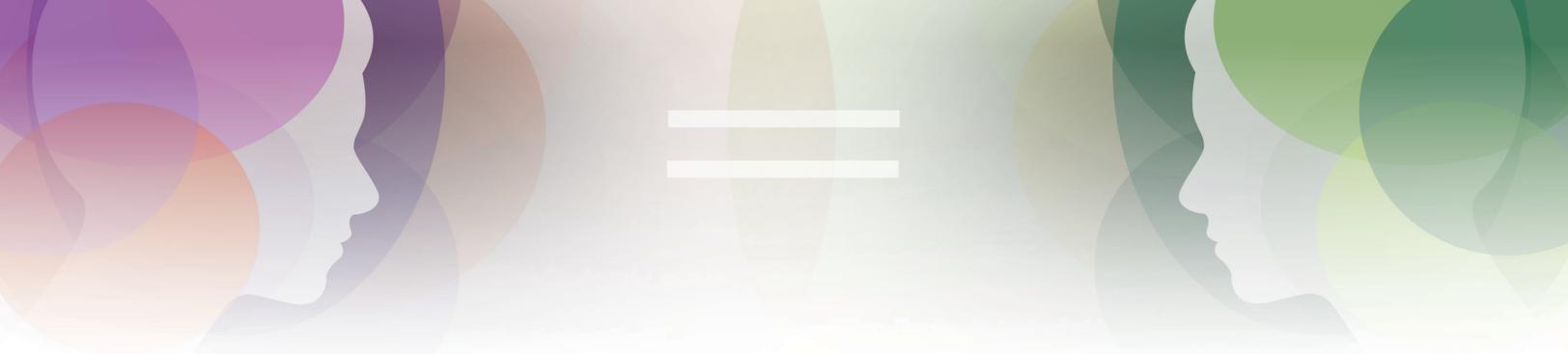
Thanks very much for your assistance; I think your clarifications were pivotal in establishing some sort of agreement between the Associate Dean and I on the relevant issues.

”

“

I wanted to thank you for everything you've done, especially helping me gain readmission into my faculty. I truly can't thank you enough.

”



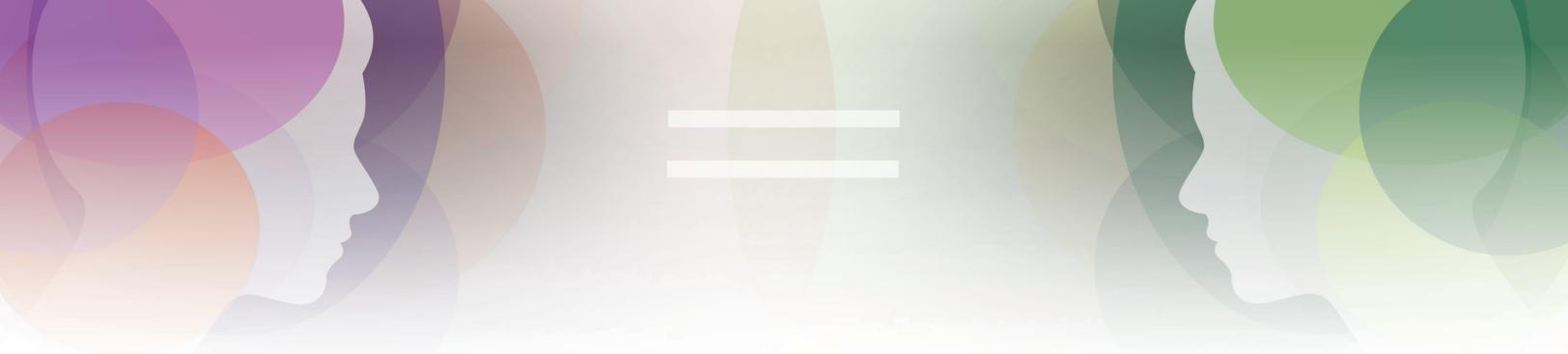
Keeping Even Closer Ties with our Fellow Canadian Higher Education Ombuds



ACCUEO

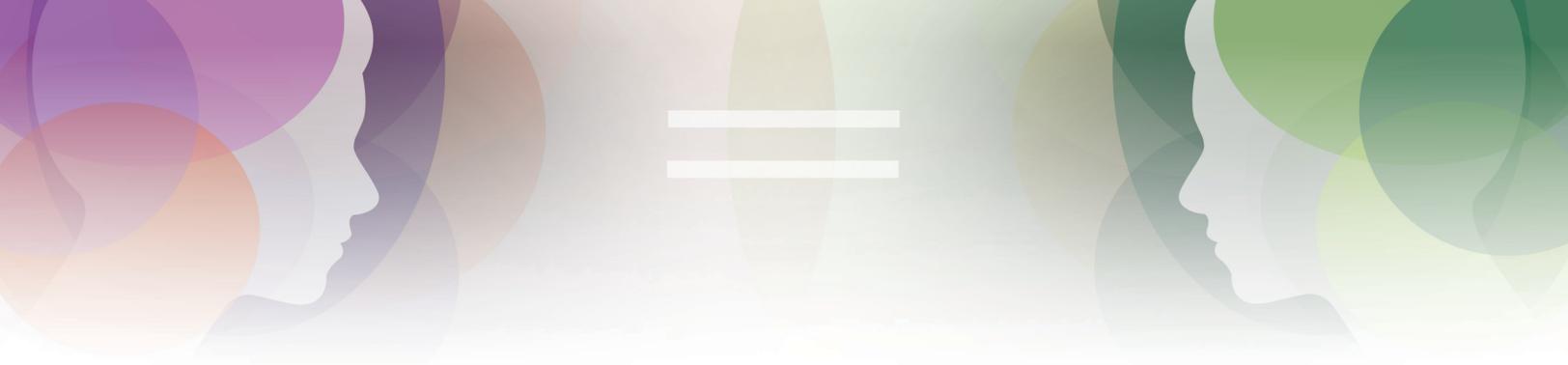
ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
OMBUDSPERSONS

The Office of the Student Ombuds has professional ties with fellow Canadian ombuds working in post-secondary education. We are members of the bilingual Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUEO/AOUCC), and are guided by their Professional Standards of Practice: Independence, Confidentiality, Impartiality, and Accessibility. Through a list:serv community of practice we consult and share resources on university policies and procedures, best practices, including those we may lack and advocate for. We also engage in regional and provincial meetings (virtually this year), providing collegial support and sharing best practices. We have communications, international relations, and equity, diversity and inclusivity. ACCUEO is dedicated to promoting the value of ombuds in higher education. To do this the ACCUEO Communications Committee has been contacting post-secondary institution administrators and student leaders to provide them with information about the value an ombuds service can bring to their institutions. See accueo.ca



Supporting International Higher Education Ombuds Colleagues through International Webinars and Conferences

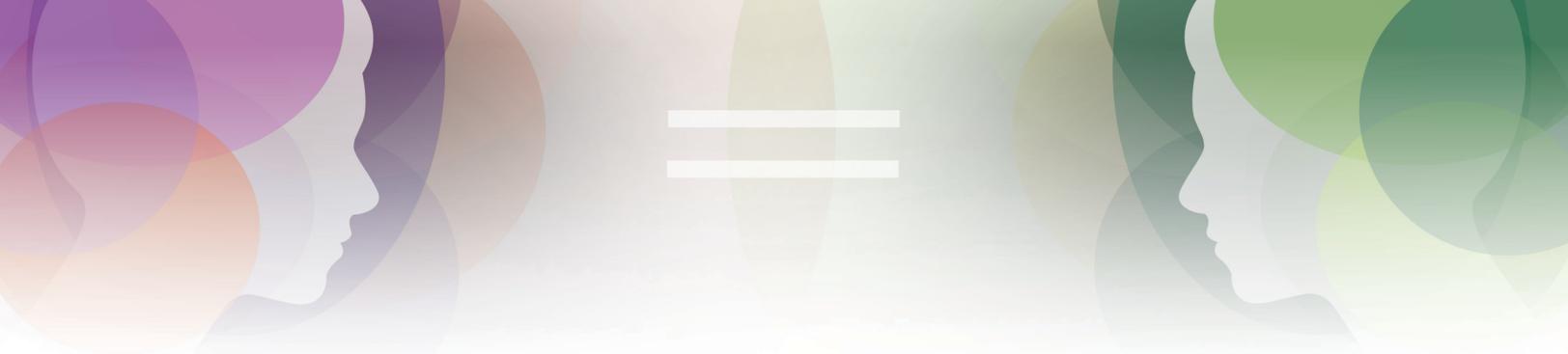
ACCUO has expanded international ombuds connections, allowing members to share in free or low fee webinars with the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education, the International Ombuds Association, California Caucus of College and University Ombudspersons, the Australian Complaints Network, and the African Ombudsman Research Centre. Webinars with the European Network were very helpful in examining the challenges we were facing during the pandemic, and engaging in creative exchange. The broader network of ACCUO, ENOHE and the Latin American, Spanish and Portuguese higher Education ombuds organizations has facilitated supportive information sharing on critical universal issues in higher education. Focusing on the Venice Principles of the International Ombudsman Institute, various HE ombuds organizations are working collaboratively to promote the value of the ombuds, through letters of support and webinars to reflect on how the ombuds role can be strengthened. This was very helpful for example when sharing survival and resilience stories through the pandemic while engaging in remote delivery of services.



University Ombuds Staff 2020 – 2021



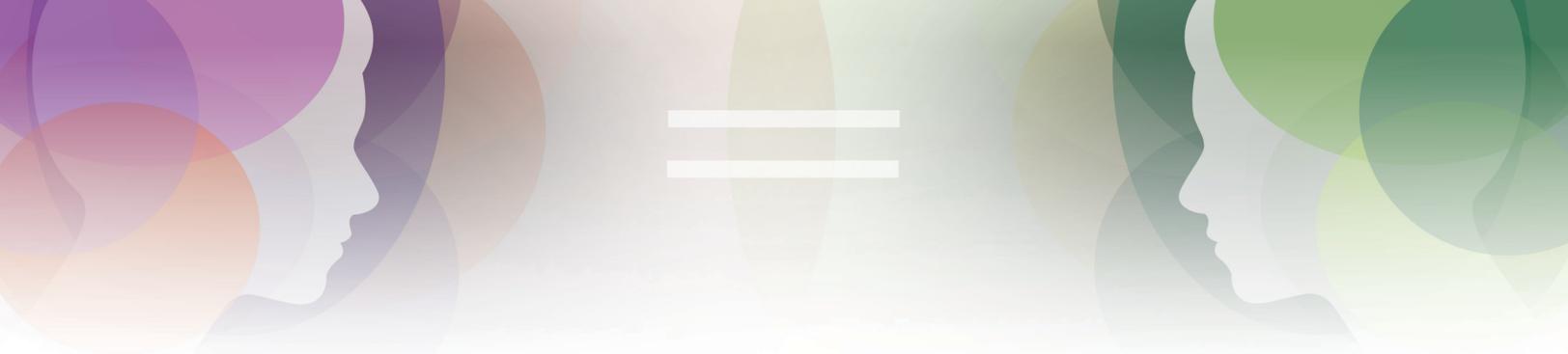
A Socially Distanced Picnic Lunch at the Legislature Park June 25, 2020. The New OSO team 2020–2021



Natalie Sharpe, Director of the OSO, has promoted strong professional connections with the OSO team members, and among Canadian higher education ombuds offices. Her work for the OSO is enriched by her responsibilities as the President of the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO/AOUCC), and with the regional Alberta Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ANOHE). These connections also enhance the collective knowledge and expertise of the OSO team. She promotes collegial exchange through bi-monthly ACCUO Bulletin and continues to build international ties with higher education ombuds organizations in USA, Europe, Latin America, Australia, and Africa. ACCUO created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee this year so that members sensitively reflect on their own privilege and biases, this helps to ensure the growth of diversity in ombuds staffing, and to provide education on the value of EDI work in the ombuds profession. The regional, national and international ties of higher education ombuds provide great opportunities for the University of Alberta ombuds team, including the interns, to engage in a variety of important committees and projects related to higher education ombudsing. The University of Alberta's ombuds internship program is regarded highly by the various ombuds organizations that are affiliated with ACCUO.



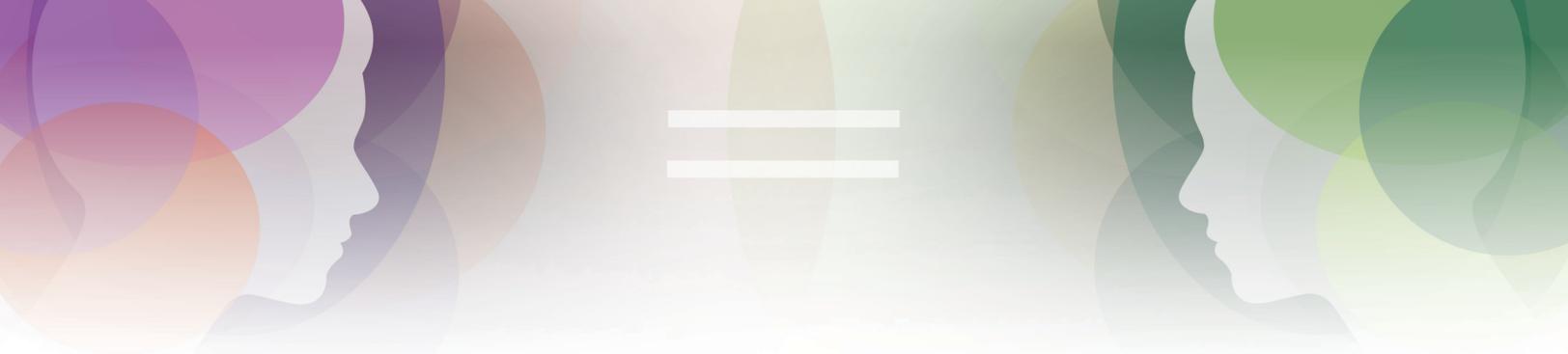
Dr. Brent Epperson, Graduate Ombudsperson, after six years, was granted a year's leave at the end of January 2020 to work at the University of Luxembourg to establish its first ombuds office. His PhD and postdoctoral work on mediation and issue framing in health care, and his past experience in University governance and advocacy as a student leader for the Graduate Students' Association, have served him well in working on issues around graduate student supervision. Dr. Epperson was also a Member of the International Relations Committee with the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudsperson, and has been working closely with the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education to build collegial ties with higher education ombuds in the European Union.



Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Undergraduate Ombudsperson and Interim Graduate Ombudsperson

The 2020 – 2021 year began with the onset of COVID-19 and with staff of the University having to work remotely. For this period, I worked both as Interim Undergraduate Ombudsperson and Interim Graduate Ombudsperson. As we were no longer able to see students physically face to face we had to adapt to support students remotely across multiple different time zones. I worked with both graduate and undergraduate students using the best practices gained in my role as Co-Chair of the Dean of Students EDI Committee and a member of the ACCUO EDI Committee. I believe the most crucial part of the tasks I performed was helping to identify the inequities that exist and were gravely affecting students. These inequities have been compounded by the pandemic and thus the responsibility of providing advice and support to students so they can clearly and effectively articulate the inequities that were affecting them and have these considered in decision making was paramount in the work I was doing. This time also brought on the opportunity for many teachable moments with students. Many difficulties that students were trying to navigate were very new to them so it was hard for them to know and understand expectations. The year came with a large increase in caseload and with students requesting more meetings than we had seen before. That was challenging, but it gave me the opportunity to think differently about how I was doing my work and to think often about what I was missing as I provided advice and support. It allowed me to build my capacity as I advised students on issues that have not been encountered previously in my ombuds' role.

Veronica Taylor, Interim Undergraduate Ombudsperson, moved into this role in February 2020 with other staff changes. Her biography is below focusing on her earlier role as the Graduate Ombuds Intern. Veronica continued as a valuable team member, assisting in the mentoring of the undergraduate ombuds interns, and attending committee meetings to provide an ombuds perspective.



Mentoring Interns During the Pandemic

This undergraduate and graduate internship program builds and hones students' ombuds skills incrementally via shadowing, mentoring and supervision. For details, contact: ombuds@ualberta.ca

Natalie Sharpe: This is the sixth year of our ombuds internship program and the first year of an intern program being taught, mentored and supervised remotely. We have chosen strong, competent and resilient students who have worked closely to bond us. We use an informal “ombuddy chat” to handle typical questions that come in the daily routine of our ombuds work with interns. The biggest issue this year was watching for intern burnout as we could not closely monitor the interns in a close, physical space. We worked very hard to maintain an open and welcoming work space online, and I think we did fairly well. We carefully monitored the interns' casework to ensure that it met the standards required, so that students were receiving clear and consistent information and support. The interns sought out professional development and supplementary training that would be beneficial in their work as interns online. They attended workshops arranged by the Dean of Students. The quality of our internship program was confirmed when Veronica Taylor returned to work with us as the Graduate Ombuds Intern as she was an undergraduate intern when our program was first launched.

Remonia Stoddart- Morrison: Mentoring interns during this pandemic in 2020-2021 came with an added layer. This was the first time our interns started their work remotely. All the training, interactions, debriefings and consultations were done online. Developing new ways of conducting the training sessions and how to stay connected had to be done so that I could help interns build their skills, capacity and confidence in taking on their new role. As we were not in the office where we could see each other from across the hallway, regular checking in with interns was done to ensure they were attending to their wellbeing and to let them know that I was available throughout the day whether through our group chat or via telephone if they needed to ask a question or consult on casework. Building that shared understanding that we are not islands so we don't have to work alone was an approach that I reminded interns of and modelled daily.

Ombuds Interns 2020 – 2021



Veronica Taylor, Graduate Ombuds Intern, is a PhD student in Counselling Psychology and previous Undergraduate Ombuds Intern (2015-2016). She previously trained in restorative justice practices, and recently completed a certificate in mediation.



Working as an undergraduate intern with the Office of the Student Ombuds sparked my interest in relational fairness and conflict resolution, and provided an incredibly rewarding opportunity to support students on our campus. As ombuds, we are uniquely positioned to level the playing field as advocates for fairness. We help students understand their options within the structures of the university so they can make informed and empowered choices. As a Graduate Ombuds Intern, I now work primarily with graduate students. Compared to undergraduate academic appeals and Code of Student Behaviour cases, graduate student cases are a lot more complex. The vast majority involve high stakes conflict between graduate students and their academic supervisors. We are still helping students navigate their rights and responsibilities within the university, but the work is more focused on interpersonal communication skills and conflict management.



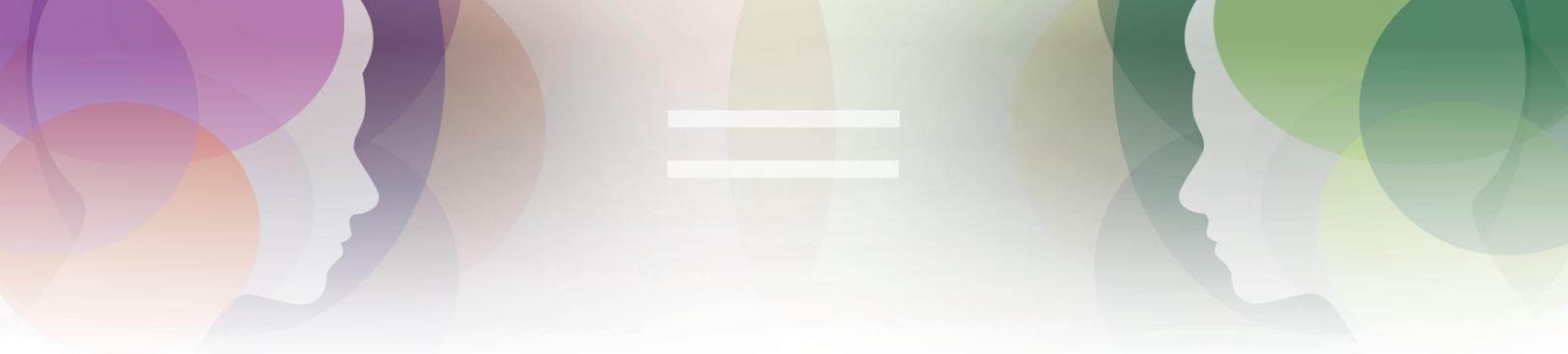


Tom Brown is a senior undergraduate student majoring in Political Science; he began his 12-month internship as the Undergraduate Ombuds Intern in May 2020. With previous experience at the Alberta Dispute Resolution Institute of Alberta, Tom was well-equipped with conceptual knowledge of ADR processes, and took his internship as a serious professional commitment. Steadfast and loyal to his team, Tom was able to handle remote delivery of ombuds services with a large intake of clients who were facing difficulties in this new remote academic setting. Tom’s internship through the Arts Work Experience program required assignments to demonstrate learning, incremental ombuds skill development, and progression toward personal professional goals. Tom engaged in various projects this year. After being awarded a Dean of Students’ Professional Development Grant to attend a Reflective Structured Dialogue half-day workshop hosted by Mediators Beyond Borders International in October on peacebuilding skills and communication preparation for mediation, Tom provided staff training on the RSD model of facilitating difficult conversations with opposing parties. Tom noted “The purpose of RSD is to provide opportunity for alternative modes of thinking, prior to resolving a conflict.”

In another assignment, Tom interviewed an internationally recognized ombuds in higher education. Here is Tom’s reflection on that interview with Jenna Brown, former ombuds at Denver University, Colorado (1999-2020).



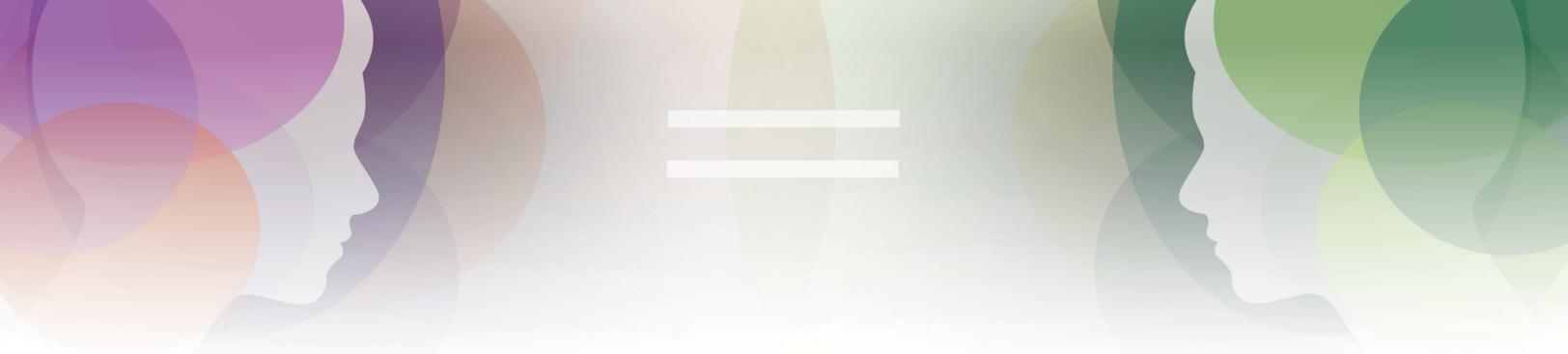
While my year as an Undergraduate Ombuds Intern at the University of Alberta seems to have ended just as quick as it began, I can now reflect back on my work term and all the amazing experiences it provided. Many of these occurred in the office itself, working closely with a diverse range of students, university staff, and of course, the other Ombuds. However, the OSO internship also provided opportunities to connect with Ombuds from offices across many different regions. One such opportunity came through a career interview I had with Jenna Brown, an experienced Ombuds and dispute resolution practitioner. While Jenna’s wealth of experience and work ethic were inspiring in and of



themselves, it was how this background interwove with her approach to life that made it immediately clear just how much the work of an Ombuds can carry over into other settings. Being curious – as an Ombuds, it is essential that we remain engaged and inquisitive when talking to students. Without this attitude, important information may be missed, and the quality of our assistance diminished. Being open-minded – without this, we might bring in preconceived assumptions into a meeting, thereby clouding our judgement. Being honest – when first building rapport and trust with a student, honesty is essential. Being honest about the level of help you can provide, the boundaries of the student-Ombuds relationship, and about potential outcomes are all critical, as without being honest in this regard, students may come to distrust our service and be less willing to seek help.

Each of these are invaluable in the context of Ombuds work. However, speaking with Jenna made it clear that the benefit of practicing these extends well beyond anyone's immediate professional landscape. As someone who has been present in the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) field since its formative years in the 1970's, Jenna bounced between various work positions relating to racial violence and injustice, relationship disputes, and community mediation, before employed as a Higher Education Ombuds. By remaining curious, open-minded, and honest, she was able to both explore new opportunities and develop credibility in a range of different fields: credibility, it seems, stemming from both her character and practical experience. Being people-focused and proactively seeking opportunities to learn more about the work of others allowed Jenna to develop a rich and engaging life – as well as work – experience. Among many other things, it's these soft skills that allow Ombuds to play the vital role that they do. Similarly, I've often found that these are also the character traits that often make Ombuds such intriguing and well-rounded individuals. In this regard, one of the biggest lessons I took away from my interview with Jenna was to practice these skills consciously, regardless of what line of work I may end up doing in the future. Similarly, I learned to be thankful for the opportunity to work even briefly in a field that celebrates these principles so actively.

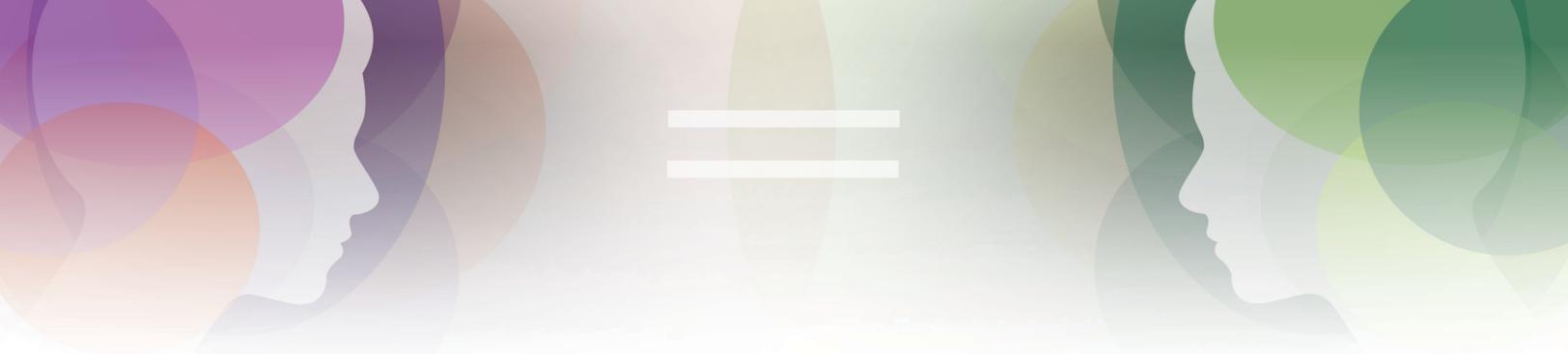




Varun Sharma enthusiastically started a month earlier in August 2020 to attend to the high volume of casework. His 10-month internship officially started in September 2020. Varun is pursuing a degree in Nutrition and Food Sciences after another degree in Biological Sciences. He was engaged in University of Calgary Residence Services before entering his internship. Varun’s manner and skill set as an empathetic listener made him very suitable for the involved casework of an intern. Varun notes: “I did not have any significant student services experience prior to this so this role has been an immense learning experience for me. I have found this work to be extremely rewarding and exceptionally thought provoking. I have always wanted to involve myself in activities and processes that have a direct impact on students’ lives and experiences. I had many opportunities to do this through this role.” While working remotely, Varun came up with a number of ways to engage with students. His passion for food as a means to wellness , inspired him to “chat” with students to ease their anxiety and loneliness. Here is one example: “One of the ways in which I saw this direct impact was suggesting to students to eat some chocolate at the end of our meetings, especially when they were particularly distraught with their case. I found that in most cases it made them laugh or at least smile.” The intense learning growth, dedication and professionalism in his work have been life altering for his future. “This has been a truly unique and exceptional experience. I will carry the learning and growth from this throughout my life.” Varun’s engaging manner is captured in the video on Equitable Fairness where he plays a student role; check it out at uab.ca/Ombuds



The Ombuds team roleplay an example of equitable fairness.



OSO Activity Summary: 2020 – 2021

- Fairness Day on Campus promoted remotely with the DOS Communications Group
- OSO conducted 33 Education and Orientation workshops (virtual)
- Attended 926 client-associated meetings outside of the office (mostly virtual)
- Attended 27 formal appeal hearings (virtual)
- Engaged in 6 Alternative Dispute Resolution processes
- Discussions with FGSR on Restorative Practices Initiative
- Workshop for Transition Year Program, First Peoples' House
- Prepared Information for virtual International student orientation on the OSO services
- Faculty of Engineering Pre-University Panel: What if things aren't going the way I want it to?
- Faculty of Engineering Course: Course Presentation—Managing Conflicts in Groups
- GSA Workshop for Election Candidates: Handling Conflict during the Elections
- Workshops on Conflict Resolution/supervisory relationships in several departments
 - Rehabilitation Medicine—Conflict Resolution
 - Faculty of Medicine Ethics and Scientific Integrity Day—Where to Go for Help When Things Go Wrong
 - 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 2019-2020
- DoS Peer Lunch & Learn—Relational Fairness
- DoS Lunch & Learn—Practicing Intersectionality & Equitable Fairness
- DoS Lunch & Learn—Practicing Equity: Action Strategies
- Presentation at Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Council Meeting on OSO Report 2019-2020
- Academic Success Centre Staff Training on the Role of the Ombuds Office
- Participation in 6 International HE webinars (Europe, California, Australia, Africa)
- Allyship Activities on Orange Shirt Day and Pink Shirt Day



Orange Shirt Day Sept 30, 2020

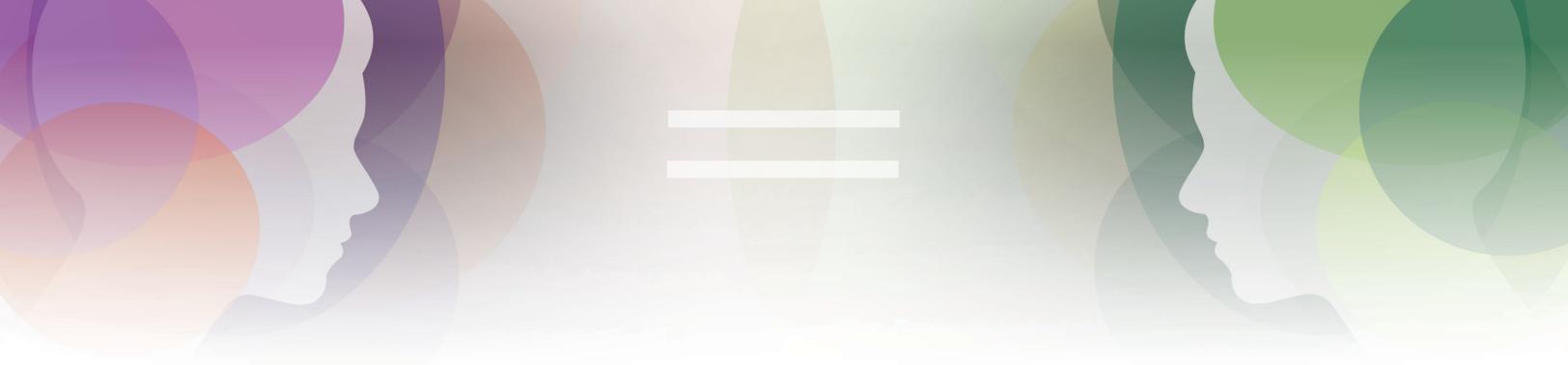


Pink Shirt Day Feb 24, 2021

Demographics of OSO Casework 2018 – 2021

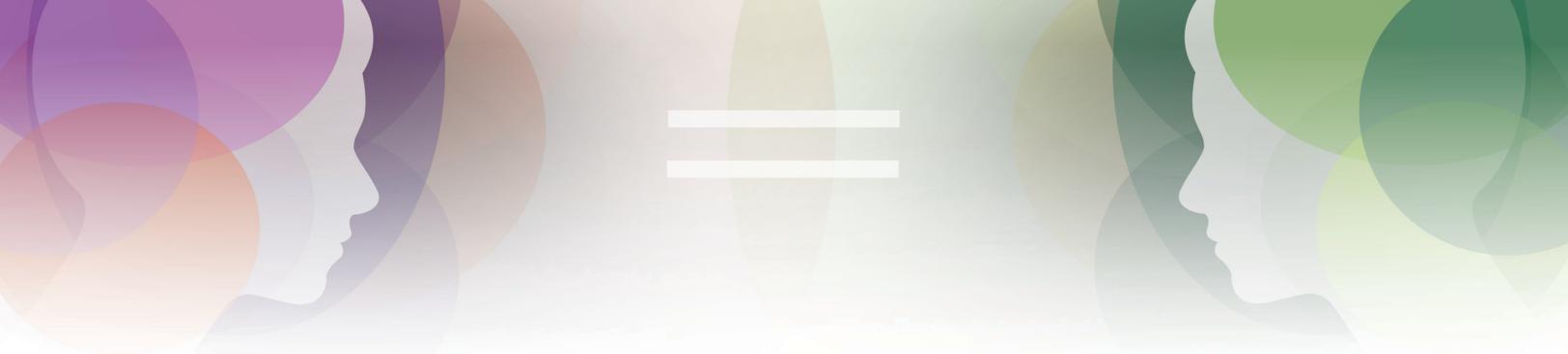
Our case activities increased this year; the number of academic offence allegations more than doubled from last year and involved lengthy investigations. Academic cases were reduced as faculties moved to pass/fail during the first period of remote delivery and eased the Required to Withdraw caseload.

Reporting Years Comparison (Apr. 1 – Mar. 31)		2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021
Clients		1192	1320	1498
	Undergraduate	904	1008	1170
	Graduate (includes Med Residents and Postdoctoral Fellows)	281	307	296
	Others (parents, admin, outside inquiry)	7	5	12
	International*	552	522	547
	Domestic	616	758	918
	Residence Status Unknown	23	44	77
	Contacts and Visits	2169	2568**	6996**
	Average Number of Visits per Client	1.8	2.0	3.5
Issues***		1516	1573	1761
	Academic	659	786	435
	Conflict	240	165	177
	Academic Offence	474	455	1011
	Non-Academic Offence	34	34	13
	Discrimination/Harassment Allegations	32	42	35
	Miscellaneous	77	91	90

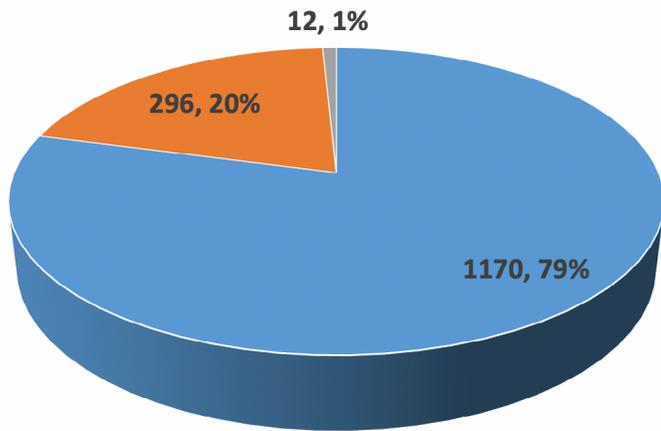


Activities				
	Investigative Meetings	342	362	926
	Committee Meetings	153	154	863
	Formal Hearings	30	31	31
	Informal Resolution/Appreciative Inquiries	6	6	6

*International students are a smaller portion of the total student population, yet their visits double those of domestic students. **Contact hours are typically scheduled for 1 hour but may vary from ½ hour to 2 hours. There is little variation of total hours spent on meeting with clients. ***Clients may present with more than one issue. (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 disruption, vandalism, and inappropriate behaviour. Discrimination/Harassment allegations related to sex, gender, racial, disability, family status discrimination, duty-to-accommodate violations. Miscellaneous includes fines, housing on campus issues, etc.) Investigative Meetings are tied to 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, eg, Conflict Management Coaching, Mediation, Shuttle Diplomacy, Appreciative Inquiry



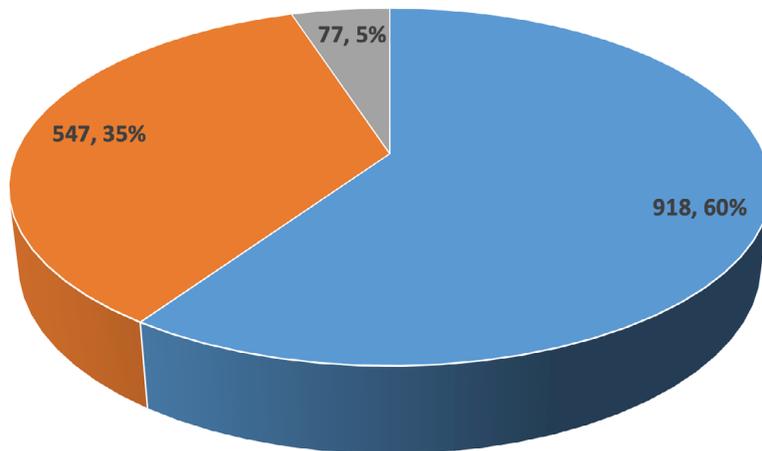
OSO Client Population 2020 - 2021

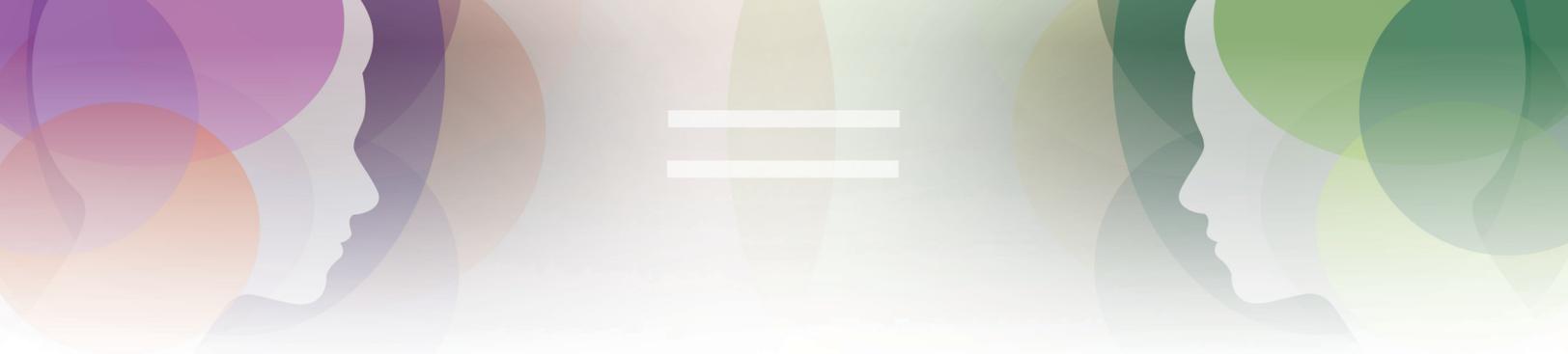


- Undergraduate Students
- Graduate Students (including Medical Residents)
- Unknown

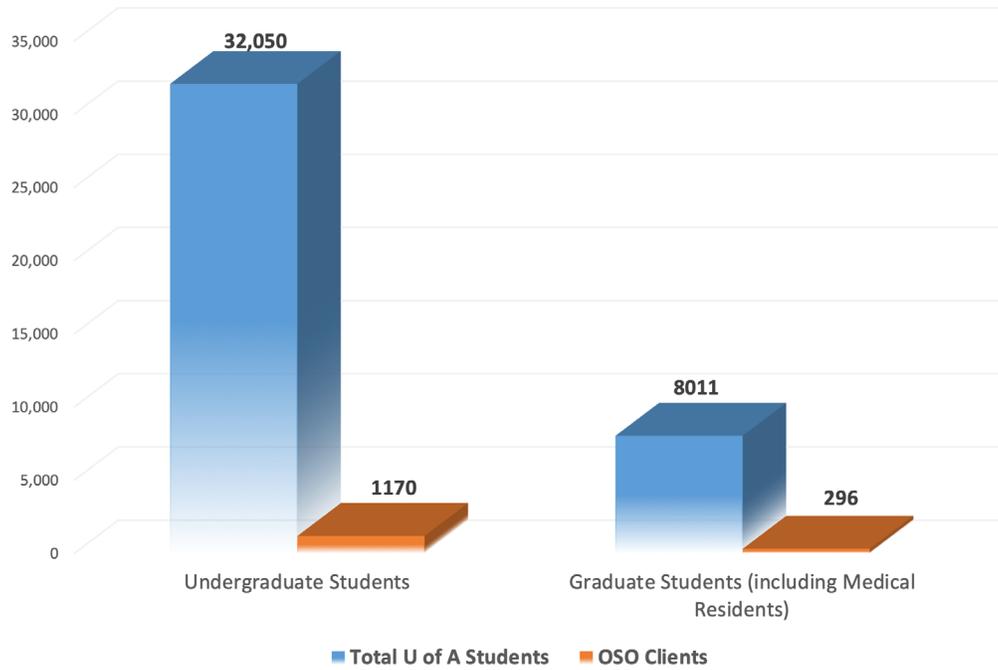
Residence Status of Clients 2020 - 2021

- Domestic Students (includes PR)
- International Students
- Unknown

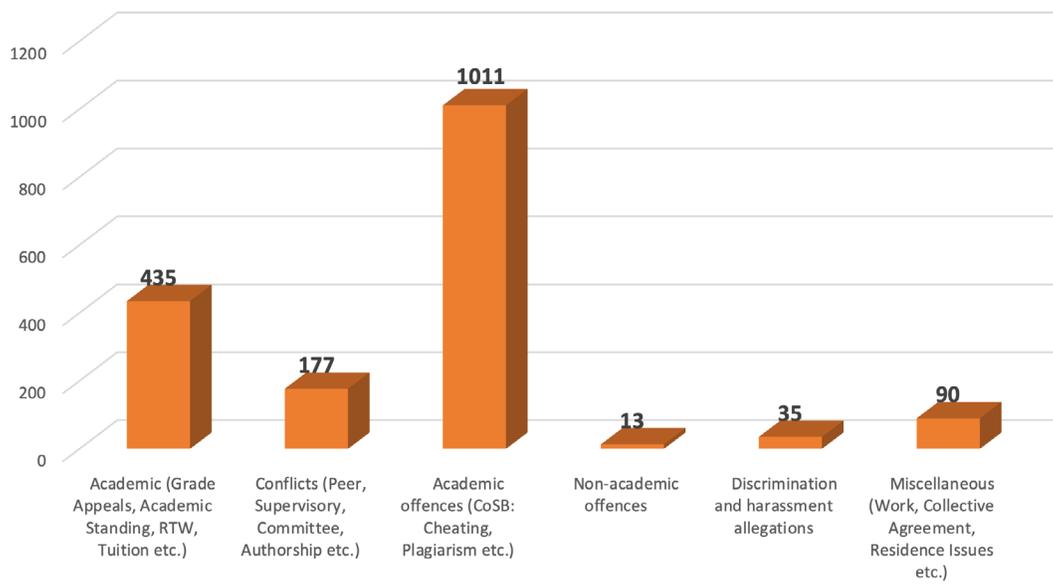


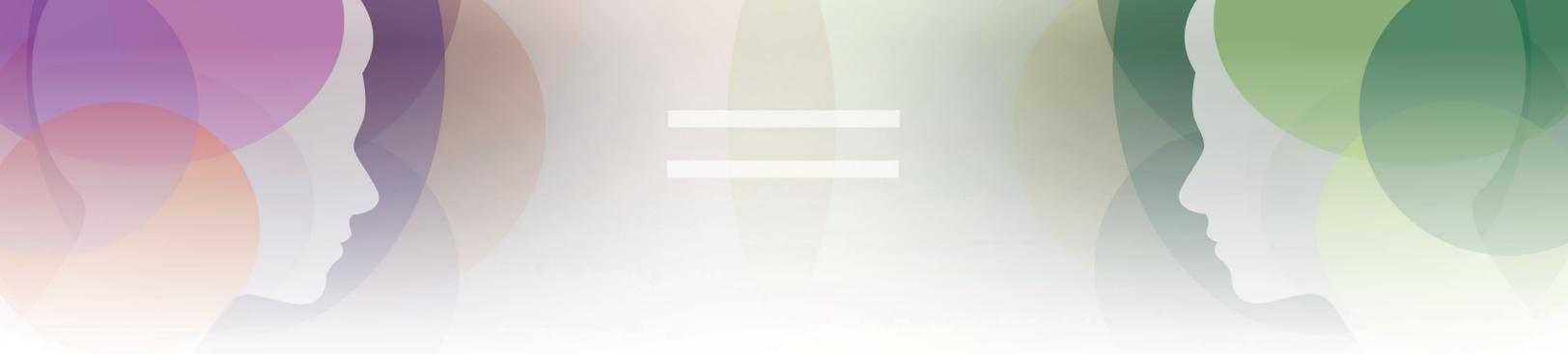


OSO CLIENTS 2020 - 2021



OSO Cases/Issue 2020 - 2021





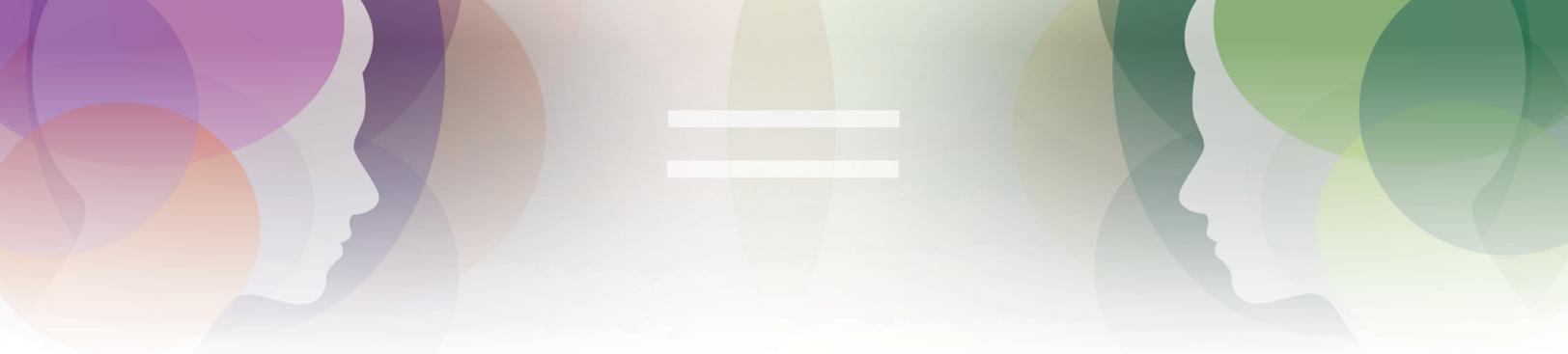
OSO Recommendations for 2019 – 2020

RECOMMENDATION #1: The OSO recommends the implementation of the strategic plan for the office, which was submitted to the Dean of Students in November 2019 for review and implementation. This includes the OSO mandate, mission, vision and values, Terms of Reference, and recommended reporting relationship in order to meet the professional standards of higher education ombuds offices in Canada and globally.

- **Response** — In May 2020, the OSO strategic plan was revised to include an Appendix of exemplary structures and practices at three Canadian higher education ombuds offices. It is the view of the OSO that these changes are necessary to strengthen the OSO's capacity to promote individual and systemic fairness. As we have not received a response for review and implementation of this strategic plan, this recommendation will carry forward to 2020–2021.

RECOMMENDATION #2: The OSO recommends the collaborative development of a restorative practices program in the graduate student community in order to more effectively mitigate supervisory and working group conflicts. Between 2016 and 2018, previous dialogues and workshops on a restorative practices' initiative were held in collaboration with the Office of the Student Ombuds, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, the Dean of Students, the Graduate Students Association, the Postdoctoral Fellow Association, the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights, and the Office of the VP Research. While those dialogues showed broad agreement on the need for more restorative practices on campus, and helped to identify resources, no program was implemented.

- **Response** — The OSO continues to work with FGSR and the GSA, promoting educational resources for graduate students and supervisors on conflict management and informal resolution processes. The OSO has engaged in ongoing conflict management sessions with graduate departments for over a decade. Currently, the OSO is expanding this work through the preparation of a series of online education modules for both graduate students and supervisors that will be available in the near future.



RECOMMENDATION #3: The OSO recommends promoting the role and ensuring the availability of ombuds services for Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) students. All university websites and brochures for the Office of the Student Ombuds as well as university appeal and complaint processes should be made available in French for CSJ students. In collaboration with the Dean of Students and the Dean of Campus Saint-Jean, provisions should be made to ensure the availability of ombuds services in French.

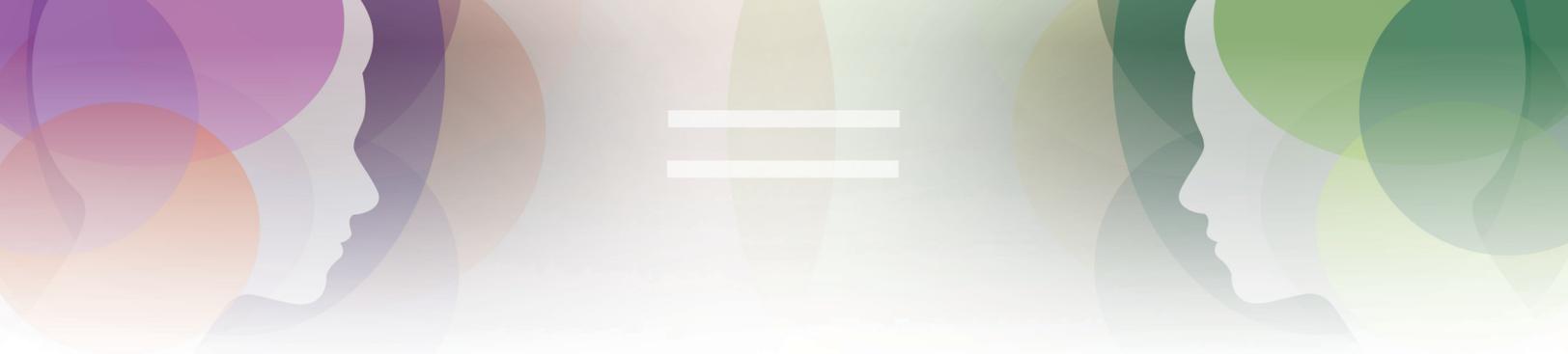
- **Response** — Since the discontinuation of the Augustana ombuds, all Augustana cases have been conducted remotely with the OSO office. The OSO continues to offer supports to Campus Saint-Jean students in French, upon request. Given the limited resources and lack of higher level appeal processes in French, the OSO recognizes a lack of equitable access for Campus Saint-Jean students in the French language. This will be a continuing recommendation until it is sufficiently addressed by the relevant university authorities.

RECOMMENDATION #4: The OSO recommends the promotion of education sessions on communication and collaboration guidelines on student group projects. To this end, course outlines should include clear academic expectations on group work and approaches to dealing with conflicts. The Office of the Student Ombuds presented an education session on establishing clear guidelines for student group projects, including approaches to dealing with conflicts for a large class this year, and provided information for the professor on course outline guidelines.

- **Response** — The OSO has conducted two presentations on comprehensive issues in student group projects, including academic responsibilities, academic integrity, and appropriate collaboration. Presentations are available to classes upon the request of the instructor.

RECOMMENDATION #5: The OSO recommends that the University explore all possible virtual modes for students to readily connect with the university and each other, and examine best practices from HE institutions, including online Higher Education institutions, in this regard.

- **Response** — The University administration actively sought best practices for remote delivery, through consultation with other Canadian universities including those with established expertise in online delivery of courses and support services. To accommodate student access and protect the health and safety of both students and OSO staff, the OSO expanded modes of service delivery to include telephone and video appointments, as well as remote video staff meetings and consultations. With the support of DOS IT staff, the OSO implemented a number of remote delivery protocols, including the development of a remote delivery manual for OSO staff members to facilitate students' access to ombuds services.



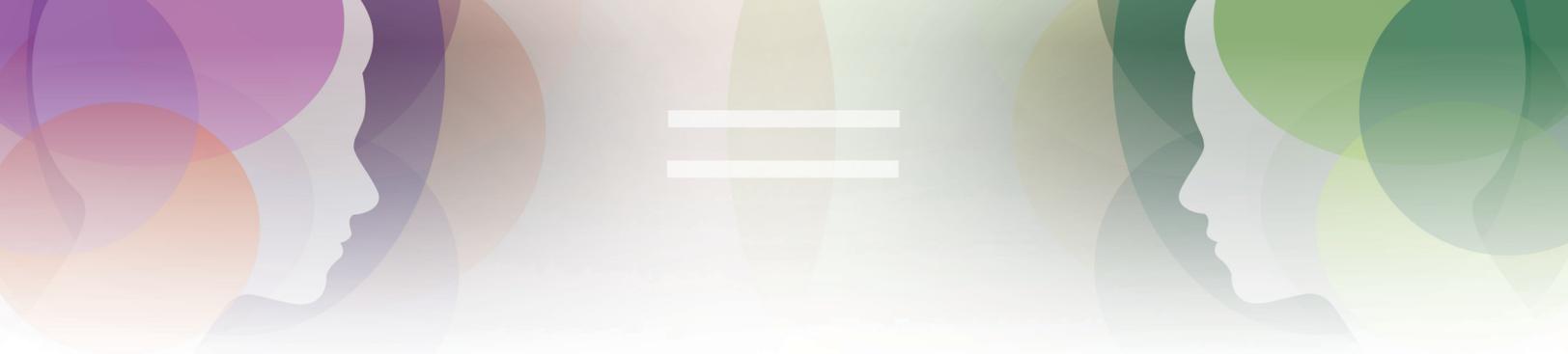
OSO Recommendations for 2020 – 2021

RECOMMENDATION #1: The OSO recommends to the Dean of Students and University Administration, the importance of an 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.

- **Rationale** — Excellence in ombuds service delivery requires the alignment of OSO operations with the Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) professional Standards of Practice, which include Independence, Confidentiality, Impartiality, and Accessibility. Despite the continuing pandemic, the OSO believes that the strategic plan will enhance its visibility and ensure ongoing, high quality services to the University community as well as a clear accountability to a broader group of stakeholders, an Ombuds Advisory Committee. It is the OSO's view that the ombuds role will be better understood by services such as the Student Services Centre in ensuring no students fall through the gaps in a large university infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATION #2: In collaboration with the Dean of Students, Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) Associate Deans (and their 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.

- **Rationale** — The above recommendation is tied to equity initiatives in the EDI strategic planning process.



RECOMMENDATION #3: 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.

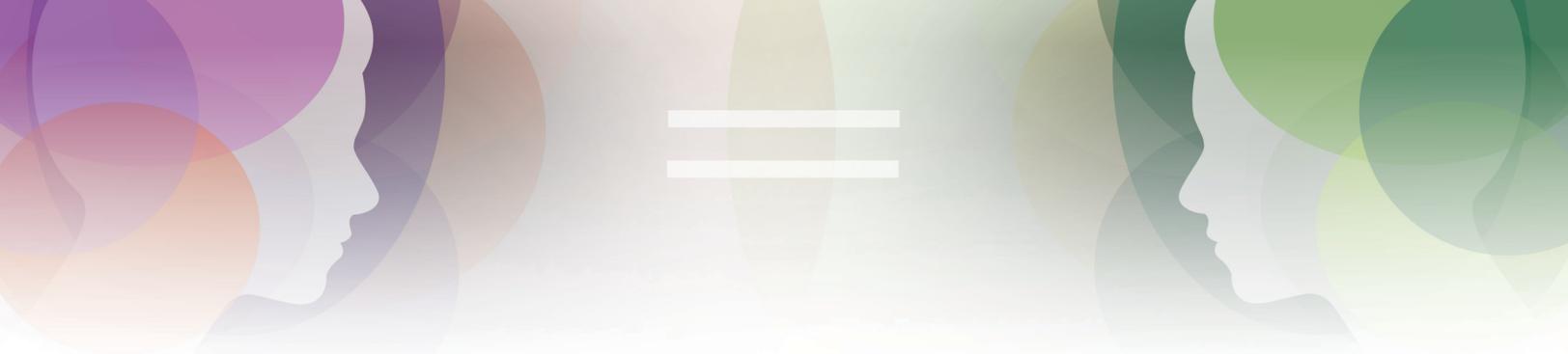
- **Rationale** — In line with ACCUO’s EDI initiative, as well as indigenization, and anti-colonialism efforts on Canadian campuses, ombuds at these institutions must also strive to engage in personal reflection of their own biases and to practice allyship to create an equitable and just campus culture.

RECOMMENDATION #4: The OSO recommends that FGSR and GSA continue to develop course modules and training to promote excellence in graduate supervision and supervisory relationships.

- **Rationale** — As two-thirds of the OSO’s graduate cases centre around supervisory conflict, these sessions are integral in assisting supervisors and students in building effective professional relationships and developing strategies to address concerns when they arise.

RECOMMENDATION #5: 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, best practices in feedback, and other professional issues in these programs to enable student success.

- **Rationale** — In addition to completing courses on campus, students in professional faculties must also complete external practicum placements off-campus. With this comes the need to navigate several complex relationships as they engage in work in a professional environment. These training sessions would help to equip instructors and students with skills to manage relationships in these settings thus making for more successful and enriching experiences for students in their practicums.



RECOMMENDATION #6: 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.

- **Rationale** — The OSO believes that using a hybrid model of service delivery will allow for greater access to ombuds' services especially for students who may not be able to attend physically in person. The current OSO office space does not have the capacity to adhere to the measures necessary to protect the health and safety of staff and students.

Sample of OSO Workshops/Presentations

Kimberlé William Crenshaw

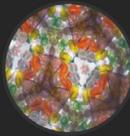


PRACTICING INTERSECTIONALITY & EQUITABLE FAIRNESS

Natalie Sharpe & Remonia Stoddart-Morrison
Office of the Student Ombuds

If we aren't intersectional, some of us, the most vulnerable, are going to fall through the cracks

https://www.asquotes.com/author/36803-Kimberle_Williams_Crenshaw



Challenging Gendered Schemas in the Kaleidoscope of my Feminized Careers

Kaleidoscope

AN OMBUDS JOURNEY
NATALIE SHARPE, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
IOA CONFERENCE
PORTLAND, OREGON 2020



Conflict Management Coaching

FACILITATORS: THOMAS BROWN
UNDERGRADUATE OMBUDS INTERN

REMONIA STODDART-MORRISON,
INTERIM UNDERGRADUATE OMBUDSPERSON



COMMUNICATING & COLLABORATING ON GROUP PROJECTS

BASIC COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES TO REACH COMMON GOALS

Natalie Sharpe and Remonia Stoddart-Morrison
Office of the Student Ombuds (OSO)
2-702 SUB

Dean of Students Peer Lunch & Learn

Practicing Equity: Action Strategies

Presenter: Remonia Stoddart-Morrison
Office of the Student Ombuds
University of Alberta
October 13, 2020

Relational Fairness:

THE POWER OF FEELING UNDERSTOOD



Veronica Taylor
OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS (OSO)

- Annual Report written and compiled by Natalie Sharpe; thanks to the OSO staff for their assistance with information, statistics, charts and biographies. Thank-you to the DOS Communications Group, especially Debbie Yee and Michael Parillas
- Inquiries/Comments: ombuds@ualberta.ca