

## **Ombudsperson Report for 2006**

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Activities for January – December 2006

I first meet students at:

- Introduction for new graduate students, August 2006.
- Introduction for TAs and teachers – dealing with problem students, learning climate, August 2006.
- I am introduced to them occasionally on DYKT (did you know that), a weekly email to graduate students.

In 2006, students called the Ombuds office about a total of 18 issues.

- 12 phone calls or emails initiated by students, resulting in no appointment.
- 6 issues raised, resulting in 10 formal meetings with students (one x 3, one x 2).
- 18 separate matters discussed with students (some involving multiple emails or phone calls).
- I corresponded with 18 students about 18 issues.

Issues Raised

1. relationships with advisor
  - delays requiring extensions of thesis deadlines
  - advisors' unwillingness to read chapters or drafts
  - advisors' delay in reading, over two months
  - changing advisors
2. difficulties with qualifying exams and grades
  - advice about rules for contesting grades
  - advice about retaking exams
  - extensions for PhD deadlines

Individual Issues Raised

- Problems with an assistantship: gender harassment – uncomfortable climate. Resolved in cooperation with Equal Opportunity Office.
- Problems with an advisor: sexual harassment (not in A&S), referred to Equal Opportunity. This issue has been mostly resolved, and should be entirely resolved shortly.
- Grad Student's belongings thrown out by College staff in a graduate residence – consulted with W&M Division of Risk Management, Virginia's Treasury Department, and VP for Student Affairs. Largely Resolved.
- Student's forgetting to turn in health form, threatened with judicial action. Resolved.
- Student asking why dissertations are submitted to UMI and then made available for sale on amazon.com. This is not an A&S issue, but an issue for the College generally. Not resolved.
- Animal care issues and OSHA risks – consulted with Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Student has dropped the issue.

As for specific recommendations, I last served as ombuds in 2003 and recommended that departments and programs introduce more explicit guidelines for faculty advising, i.e. suggesting turnaround times for theses. That has happened. I do not see other programmatic changes that would resolve the current slate of problems. The College may want to revisit its relationship with UMI, given that UMI now sells dissertations on amazon.com.