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The 461st Convocation

Address: “Yes, No, Perhaps: Teachings from the Dialectic of the Middle Ages”

By Anne W. Robertson

I congratulate you on this defining moment and for all that this day represents for you and your families. *Yes*, the testimony of my colleagues assures me that you are thoroughly prepared and superbly qualified to receive your degrees; *no*, I personally shall require nothing more of you; although *perhaps* in the next few minutes I will succeed in urging you to contemplate one particular aspect of your Chicago experience.

In your time here you have learned how to look at issues from all sides. The very structure of your educational experience stressed this: the small classes, the seminars, the discussion groups, and the emphasis on a core of texts and methods that brought you into what we hope was fruitful dialogue with us and with your fellow students. This structure is one of the distinctive features of the University, perhaps the primary reason you chose to come to Chicago. Through the close give-and-take you had with teachers and peers, you have been encouraged to speak out, to formulate your opinions through questioning, even at times through direct confrontation. You tried your ideas in numerous forums outside the classroom, too—the workshops, the various colloquia series in your departments and schools—and we hope that the open boundaries within the University stimulated you to push across disciplinary lines. Some of you today have written dissertations, “original contributions to knowledge,” as they are defined, and we read their impressive titles in our programs. Many of you have just completed senior essays, others will have taken a battery of challenging exams. In all of these exercises, you were concerned in large measure with “knowing things,” with creating, finding, interpreting, adding to, building up, and tearing down “knowledge.” Whatever the pitfalls of the Chicago Plan in our College and of the Socratic method in the College, professional, and graduate schools, you have emerged more certain of how to establish the rightness of your own position and more willing or better able to understand other points of view. Good—that is what we hope we have given you; that is one of the things we believe is unique about the Chicago experience.

And although we like to think that we do this well, our commitment to helping you learn to produce knowledge through vigorous debate from different angles is hardly new, of course. In fact, the dialectical method received particular impetus in the Middle Ages, which is my period of study. The enigmatic Peter Abelard, in his treatise *Sic et Non (Yes and No)*, took the daring step of setting what were seemingly conflicting passages of Scripture side by side. He then went on to show how their contradictions could best be resolved through open discussion. He writes (and here, by the way, I quote from the still standard edition of his work, made and published at Chicago by our own late professor of philosophy Richard McKeon): “By doubting we come to inquiry and by inquiry we perceive the truth.”¹ In Abelard’s day, such bold thinking was not necessarily lauded, and, unlike the University of Chicago, his own home institution—the burgeoning University of Paris—was not always supportive. The dialectic that he

passed down nonetheless flourished and forms the backbone both of the great summits of the late Middle Ages and of all subsequent logic and scientific inquiry, as you know from your familiarity with it in these and other guises.

In my own area of music history, the dialectical method has proven crucial time and again. In the early fourteenth century, for instance, a radically new kind of music (one with fast notes and—horror of horrors—duple meter, rather than the theologically sanctioned triple meter) was hotly debated by theorists who espoused positions for and against it. So, too, the birth of opera at the beginning of the seventeenth century sparked heated dialogue between persons on the one hand favoring and on the other hand denouncing the unabashed musical emotionalism of this genre. And on and on it goes throughout music history, as in all fields. It is no accident that the National Endowment for the Humanities, along with many other granting organizations, reserves a category of awards specifically for collaborative research projects; intense dialogue between two or more parties traditionally leads to scholarly and scientific breakthrough, new social ideas, and artistic innovation of all kinds.

But is this the sum total of your Chicago education—the “yes and no”? Did you simply learn to exercise impeccable reasoning here? I hope not. Remember what Abelard says: “By *doubting* we come to inquiry.” What about that initial process of “doubting”? Often it is messy—not at all the more controlled back-and-forth of the “inquiry” that follows. That is, sometimes we all but flounder our way to the inquiry by which we perceive the truth. In your own experience, think about the papers you wrote in which you found it difficult even to conceptualize the problem; think of the questions you thought you would never answer, the ones with which you struggled just to get to the point where you could write that list of pros and cons.

You have all experienced this frustration in one form or another, and I like to think that, in dealing with it, you engaged in another kind of dialectic. For the sake of giving my remarks a pithy title, I have used the word “perhaps” to indicate this “other dialectic.” And what I am referring to here is this: do we sometimes place too much emphasis on “knowing,” that is, on what we think should be the end product, arrived at through careful reasoning? Do we often fail to appreciate the initial, transitional, or even opposite, states that we occupy in our work before we get to the more disciplined process of “knowing”?

My own recent experience with the “perhaps,” rather than the “yes and no,” is, I imagine, fairly typical. I studied a group of confusing fourteenth-century French songs that inexplicably included Latin theological sayings. For a long time, it seemed impossible to reconcile these two conflicting registers, the one vernacular and the other sacred: how could I make any sense of them? Only when I was able to open my mind completely and imagine the previously unimaginable could I begin to understand these pieces for what they really were. This type of research I found to be, quite frankly, uncomfortable at first; for quite a while I could not rely on the trusty

tools of reasoning that I normally use.

In the Middle Ages, in fact, mystic theologians made much of the direct *opposite* of “knowing” God, which they called “unknowing,” or the “negative way” (the *via negativa*). You may have encountered that English mystic, anonymous to us now but nonetheless famous in his time, who wrote a treatise entitled *The Cloud of Unknowing*. I think there is a lesson to be drawn from his work. That is, the way to “knowing” is sometimes to be found in the revelation that first comes from “unknowing.” As the author of *The Cloud* writes: “For when you first begin . . . all that you find is a darkness, a sort of cloud of unknowing; you cannot tell what it is, except that you experience in your will a simple reaching out. . . . This darkness and cloud is [*sic*] always [*there*].” And then he says something quite interesting: “So set yourself to rest in this darkness as long as you can.”²

Many of you have already sensed this state, I’m sure. And several of my colleagues have as well in dealing with the medieval mystics in their writings. Our own Dean in the Division of the Humanities, Janel Mueller, wrote the preface for Walter Hilton’s mystical treatise called *The Scale of Perfection*. Christina von Nolcken in the Department of English is working on Henry Suso’s *Hourglass of Wisdom*, and Michael Camille of the Department of Art has studied its fantastic illuminations. So, too, Bernard McGinn of the Divinity School is in the midst of a monumental, multi-volume study of the history of western mysticism, and he is equally active in bringing mystical treatises to light in modern editions. In rubbing shoulders with these and others of my colleagues, I hope that you’ve already gained an understanding of this state, and I also hope you’ve recognized and savored it. Perhaps it has even led you to new ways of looking at things. I, for instance, ultimately found that those hybrid fourteenth-century songs were in fact reflections of the standard mystical journey to the Divine, albeit written in the very opposite, earthy language of courtly love. And I even dare to think that my newest colleague in medieval studies might have experienced something of this condition. Faced with a musical notation that is, and forever will be, indecipherable to us, our own President Don Randel nonetheless unraveled, piece by piece, the musical repertoires of eleventh-century Spain in his now classic study of the responsorial psalm tones for the Mozarabic office.

All of this, of course, is neo-Platonic philosophy at its most basic, and it has made its appearance many times since its formulation in the Middle Ages. I hope you will cherish the image of “unknowing,” both as a comfort (perhaps even when your future employer is annoyed because you do not “know” something) and as a challenge to experience this *tabula rasa*, this open-mindedness, this place in which intuition and insight are sometimes born. Yes, of course, I still urge you to seek the “yes and no,” to look for truth in all of your work, to remove doubt and uncertainty, to teach your students, build your portfolios, win your cases, treat disease and cure your patients, and address society’s ills. But at the same time, I exhort you to “know” through “not knowing”: revel a little in the question, shun the urge to grasp easy an-

swers, linger from time to time in the cloud, dwell whenever you can in that place where deep wisdom often lies. I promise you that doing so will bring you benefits of the most wondrous kind.

But now we must descend from this stratospheric discussion. The present moment is hardly one of “perhaps.” Indeed, it is one of absolute clarity, as your steps across this floor in a few moments will attest. You have graduated, you have accomplished every task we have set before you. And with your families, I say *gaudeamus igitur*, and I extend to you, on behalf of my colleagues, very best wishes for everything that you will do.

Notes

1. Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non: A Critical Edition*, ed. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976–77), 103 (lines 338–9).

2. James Walsh, ed., *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 120–21.

Anne W. Robertson is the Claire Dux Swift Professor in the Department of Music and the College.

Summary

The 461st convocation was held on Friday, August 25, 2000, in Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. Don Michael Randel, President of the University, presided.

A total of 372 degrees were awarded: 22 Bachelor of Arts in the College, 7 Master of Science in the Division of the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 22 Master of Arts in the Division of the Humanities, 24 Master of Science in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 82 Master of Arts in the Division of the Social Sciences, 1 Master of Arts in Teaching in the Division of the Social Sciences, 104 Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 2 Master of Arts in the Divinity School, 1 Master of Divinity in the Divinity School, 1 Master of Liberal Arts in the William B. and Catherine V. Graham School of General Studies, 1 Doctor of Jurisprudence in the Law School, 1 Master of Arts in the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, 2 Master of Public Policy in the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, 1 Master of Arts the School of Social Service Administration, 24 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 18 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Humanities, 17 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 34 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Social Sciences, 7 Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Business, and 1 Doctor of Philosophy in the Divinity School.

Anne W. Robertson, the Claire Dux Swift Professor in the Department of Music and the College, delivered the convocation address, “Yes, No, Perhaps: Teachings from the Dialectic of the Middle Ages.”

The 463rd Convocation

Address: "Only Connect: Scholarship, Fellowship, and Survival"

By Homi K. Bhabha

This convocation marks a milestone in your lives and an equally important moment in the longer life cycle of your alma mater, the University of Chicago. It is my great pleasure to congratulate you both on a remarkable achievement. The partnership between enlightened individuals and liberal institutions is at the very heart of modern, democratic life, and the ritual of convocation helps us to celebrate that simple, yet essential, truth. It is a commonly held belief that great universities somehow transcend their own times and achieve a kind of universal fame. Occasions like this serve to remind us that this is only partially true. However *great* a university may be, it is only ever as *good* as the *next* class that its faculty successfully graduates. Every degree granted, every dissertation completed, reinterprets the mission and the tradition of the University of Chicago.

Tradition, in this sense, is the living tissue of an educational history that goes back, in our case, to 1892. Traditions are nourished by a sense of the past; traditions are often expressed or embodied in an archaic vocabulary like the academic dress that we wear to officiate on such occasions. Our vestments are only symbolic of our investiture in a much greater idea of collegiality as a community of purpose. But this sense of the past should not pull us back into an earlier time so that we may dwell there, resting on our laurels: the "pulling back" of tradition is like the drawing back of the string of a bow just a moment before the arrow is released. The reverse thrust of tradition—the past—is the energy we need to make active our inherited values in the "present" of our everyday lives and labors. It is only by connecting the institution and the individual, the tasks of scholarship with the wider work of achieving human fellowship, that we can "keep alive the *tradition* of the life of the mind."

What is "the tradition of the life of the mind"? The phrase comes from the writings of Edward Levi, one-time President of the University of Chicago, and it captures that productive tension between the importance of tradition and the necessity for revision that I have been talking about. He used the phrase in a convocation address at the University of Rochester in the late sixties, at a time when the American university was beset by deep anxieties and ambivalences. The Vietnam War created a profound sense within the academic community that, in attempting to protect "the life of the mind," universities were, in fact, closing the gates of the ivory tower. The life of the mind, many believed, was being wrongly protected from its wider responsibilities to the national and international community. There is, of course, considerable debate about the inheritance of the 1960s and the era's relevance for the millennium. However you look at it, it was an era of experimentation and evaluation, a moment when the competing claims of emergent community rights—civil rights, women's rights, students' rights, cultural rights—forced society to reconsider what the public "interest" may be. As an attempt to redefine the public good from the perspective of the marginal and the powerless, the 1960s certainly shared something of the "human rights culture" of our own times. Now, I do

not want to attribute to President Levi opinions that he may not have held in 1969, and sympathies that he might not have felt. But in keeping with the ritual of the revision of tradition that I have suggested is true to the very spirit of convocation itself, I would like to ask what it might mean to keep alive the tradition of the life of the mind for us in 2000.

In 1969, President Levi wrote:

Universities and colleges over time have kept alive the tradition of the life of the mind. They have continued the traditions of culture and rediscovered cultures which have died. They have . . . emphasized the continuing need for free inquiry and discussion, the importance of scientific discovery, and the need to understand the non-rational. They have stood for the concept of the wholeness of knowledge, for the morality of that intellectual criticism which is so difficult because it is self-criticism, requiring the admission of error. . . . This is what a liberal education is about, and its illumination is essential if graduate and professional work are to participate in the intellectual tradition. [This] is an approach to education that emphasizes the magic of a disciplined process, self-generating, self-directing and free from external constraints. An approach which requires an independence of spirit, a voluntary commitment. It forces the asking of questions. It is not content with closed systems. (4/5)

A liberal education enhances the life of the mind when it strives for the "wholeness of knowledge." But such "wholeness of knowledge," Levi suggests, is grounded in a tradition of self-criticism—a confrontation with the limits of your learning and the limitations of your field. There is an engaging irony in this idea. The wholeness of knowledge is not the expression of an incarnate idea, nor is it a seed of wisdom that grows organically. The educational "whole" is built up of a series of intersecting lines and limits drawn across disciplines. The borders of your discipline are the frontiers of other disciplines and the growth of knowledge depends on border crossings and the redrawing of disciplinary maps. Intellectual criticism is not simply the contest or competition between disciplinary territories, nor is self-criticism satisfied by scholarly disputation. Self-criticism goes beyond arguments about method, the status of facts, or the fate of departments and paradigms. Self-criticism is a *moral* or ethical *attitude* that strives towards educational excellence. Intellectual "doubt" engenders self-criticism and provides us with an ethical predisposition to engage in a dialogical relationship with other scholarly values and cultural perspectives that may be distinct from ours and in disagreement with ours.

The "magic of a disciplined process," to use Levi's unusual and suggestive phrase, lies in breeding discontent with "closed systems"; and the importance of rationalist scientific discovery would consist in creating, at the same time, the desire to under-

stand the non-rational. Discipline and magic, science and the non-rational: the making of the educational whole is nothing less than the process of bridging intellectual borders, the art of grafting academic values, or the act of translating the competing virtues of our disciplines. It would, I think, be true to the spirit of Levi's thought if I were to suggest—somewhat metaphorically—that he urges us to connect the prose and the passion; to bridge the prose of information, research, regulation, calculation, description, and narration with the passion of imagination, creation, discovery, risk, commitment, courage, and originality. The magic of the disciplines arises from building such bridges that may bear the weight of our intellectual projects.

Connecting the prose and the passion has long been both the "magic" of the University of Chicago and part of its ethical educational endeavor. In turning to Levi's convocation address I drew upon one luminous moment in that long history of liberal learning and reflection that is our heritage. And it was to echo that call for connection, that led me to take, as my text for today, the words of that great English liberal, the novelist E. M. Forster. Let me quote one of the most celebrated passages from his novel, *Howards End*:

. . . Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect. . . . Without it we are meaningless fragments, half monks, half beasts, unconnected arches that have never joined into a man.

For those of you who are as embarrassed as I am by Forster's unabashed, ungendered reference to all human beings as "men," there is some questionable comfort to be found in a statement made by an earlier President of the University, Dr. Ernest Burton, at an alumni gathering in 1925: "If any of the ladies here should take offense at my use of the masculine term," he said, "I should like to say that I always include the women in the term 'men'." Forster's subject is human love; ours, of course, is the love and the life of scholarly learning. But in both cases, we must heed the liberal creed—"only connect."

In the seven years that I have been at this University, I have seen a growing connection, even a glowing collaboration, between the prose and the passion of scholarship at all levels. For instance, literary scholars—both faculty and students—have revised the canons of English and American literature in the light of postcolonial and minority writers who range from the Americas to the Pacific Rim; artists have realized their passionate visions with the new technologies of digital and virtual representation; the humanities, social sciences, and the hard sciences have come together to redefine the place of "human rights" in the curriculum; legal scholars have turned the attention of their students towards the psychology and pathology of emotional and affective life; anthropologists and medics have joined forces in debating the political culture of AIDS on a worldwide scale; research centers focus on gender, race, and ethnicity in

order to produce a "wholeness of knowledge" that is based on the histories and experiences of those who have most sharply felt the glancing blow of racial or sexual discrimination—an unwarranted wounding for nothing other than their cultural "difference." Medical and business ethics are now as significant as the more traditional specialisms in these dynamic fields. The claims of globalization theory continue to be tested and contested in departments that extend from sociology to international relations and comparative literature. Our great strengths in musicology will soon be supported by an exciting program in musical performance. In each of these instances, the tradition of the life of the mind is enriched when the prose of pedagogy is extended in the direction of those passions that bridge *universities and societies*. To achieve the "wholeness of knowledge" will always remain an aspiration, never empirically or experientially achievable. But we aim towards that sense of ethical and intellectual inclusiveness when we draw back the bow and release the arrow of tradition into a future that we can never completely know or control.

Indeed, this great interjective and interdisciplinary "dissemination" of ideas that increasingly characterizes campus life, is a contemporary version of President Harper's vision of a three-fold framing of the founding faiths of this University. Original research ranked first in Harper's scheme of things. Then came instruction, which transmitted a body of knowledge, but was especially concerned with producing what he called "an attitude of mind," an intellectual temper close to the self-critical credo that Levi was to later propose. Finally, Harper insisted on "dissemination" (the phrase is his), which consisted in making public, "through the voice or through the printed page," the results of research and instruction. What the University of Chicago has sown in the world, it now richly harvests.

There was a time when such curricular developments and intellectual innovations as I have been speaking of became the battleground of the culture wars. There was a fear that the fragile "craft" of scholarship would lose its bearings when forced into the stormy seas of public policy. There was a sense that academic standards were falling as they passed into the hands of standard bearers for whom fashion or flag-waving was all. On both sides of the divide there was a desire for separatism and sovereignty. The liberal left pursued a politics of identity that was schismatic and separatist; the right resorted to claims for cultural authenticity and traditional authority that attempted to homogenize a diverse society. In their rage for recognition and representation, both sides neglected that striving for wholeness that is built on self-criticism and proper intellectual doubt. The prose became rhetorical; much passion was unwisely spent. The positive ethical value of self-criticism, as crucial to the life of the mind, was unfortunately eclipsed.

Happily, today a wiser counsel prevails. Our "inter"-disciplinarity is grounded on a notion of human and scholarly "*inter-est*" that Hannah Arendt, who once taught at this University, has explained in the Walgreen lectures she delivered at Chicago

in the late fifties:

[Action and speech] . . . constitute in the word's most literal significance, something which *inter-est*, which lies between people and can relate and bind them together. Most action and speech is concerned with this in-between which varies with each group of people, so that most words and deeds are about some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent. . . . But for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things that we visibly have in common. (182)

It is my sincerest hope that your experiences at the University of Chicago may have led you in action, speech, and writing to such a sense of human and intellectual *inter-est*. May the life of the mind bring you to a kind of self-critical fellowship that binds people together while enhancing their

sense of agency and freedom. If we have made it attractive for you, over your years here, to become deeply invested in such an ideal of education, then I have little doubt that the best that this University has to offer will continue to *inter-est* you, in Hannah Arendt's sense, to bind you together in purpose and performance. In the midst of the variety and diversity of your lives, let there always be a space for that intangible "in-between" of human and intellectual interest which is spanned by the connected gothic arches of prose and passion. Without such "wholeness of knowledge," life and learning lose their mission and their magic.

Thank you for listening. My warmest congratulations to you, your families, your friends, and your teachers!

Homi K. Bhabba is the Chester D. Tripp Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities in the Departments of English Language & Literature, Art History, and South Asian Languages & Civilizations, the Committee on the History of Culture, and the College.

Summary

The 463rd convocation was held on Friday, December 8, 2000, in Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. Don Michael Randel, President of the University, presided.

A total of 360 degrees were awarded: 35 Bachelor of Arts in the College, 2 Bachelor of Science in the College and the Division of the Physical Sciences, 6 Master of Science in the Division of the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 25 Master of Arts in the Division of the Humanities, 1 Master of Fine Arts in the Division of the Humanities, 18 Master of Science in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 58 Master of Arts in the Division of the Social Sciences, 1 Master of Arts in Teaching in the Division of the Social Sciences, 99 Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 3 International Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business, 2 Master of Divinity in the Divinity School, 5 Master of Liberal Arts in the William B. and Catherine V. Graham School of General Studies, 2 Master of Public Policy in the

Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, 2 Master of Arts the School of Social Service Administration, 11 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Biological Sciences and the Pritzker School of Medicine, 16 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Humanities, 18 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Physical Sciences, 41 Doctor of Philosophy in the Division of the Social Sciences, 7 Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Business, 7 Doctor of Philosophy in the Divinity School, and 1 Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Service Administration.

Homi K. Bhabba, the Chester D. Tripp Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities in the Departments of English Language & Literature, Art History, and South Asian Languages & Civilizations, the Committee on the History of Culture, and the College, delivered the convocation address, "Only Connect: Scholarship, Fellowship, and Survival."

University Disciplinary Actions: 1999–2000

By Edward Turkington, *Deputy Dean of Students in the University*

December 5, 2000

The Office of the Dean of Students in the University has been asked by the Council of the University Senate to report each year on matters pertaining to the University disciplinary legislation enacted by the council on May 23, 1970, and amended on June 8, 1976.

I am happy to report that no University disciplinary committee was required to meet during the 1999–2000 academic year.

The Office of the Dean of Students also reports to the council on disciplinary matters that have occurred in the various academic units during the year. In 1999–2000, area disciplinary committees were convened on eleven occasions to act on questions involving eleven students.

The Committee on College Discipline was convened twice: A student who had cheated on a test was suspended for three quarters. A board of review noted that the sanction had financial implications for the student that were not known by the disciplinary committee, and it reduced the suspension to two quarters. In the other hearing, a student who made verbal threats and struck another student was suspended

for two quarters. The committee, accepting the sincerity of the student's contrition, then suspended the sanction.

Disciplinary committees in the professional schools and graduate divisions met on nine occasions.

Four hearings were held in the Graduate School of Business. A committee found that a student had included misrepresentations in materials submitted to GSB career services, and it suspended the student for two quarters. The sanction was upheld on review. In three separate hearings involving charges of academic dishonesty or plagiarism, committees imposed sanctions of one quarter suspensions on two students and a suspension of three quarters on a third.

In the Pritzker School of Medicine, a student was suspended for two quarters for improper use of the University's information technology system. Another student who petitioned for resumption of studies after a leave of absence for substance abuse was suspended for four quarters.

In the Division of the Social Sciences, a student who continued harassing another student after having already been placed on

probation by an earlier disciplinary committee was suspended for four quarters. The sanction was sustained on review. In another hearing, a student found to have falsified documentation concerning a fellowship award was suspended for two quarters.

In the Division of the Biological Sciences, a student who ignored an official directive to cease contact with certain faculty was suspended for one quarter.

The chart below shows the numbers of students sent before area disciplinary committees for the past ten academic years.

Students sent before disciplinary committees, 1990–2000

Year	College/ Academic	College/ Other	Graduate/ Academic	Graduate/ Other	Total
90–91	—	6	—	2	8
91–92	2	5	15	6	28
92–93	3	1	5	2	11
93–94	1	5	4	—	10
94–95	1	5	3	1	10
95–96	1	3	5	3	12
96–97	1	9	2	4	16
97–98	0	4	1	2	7
98–99	1	2	5	4	12
99–00	1	1	5	4	11
Average	1.1	4.1	4.5	2.8	12.5

Report of the Panel on Sexual Harassment for 1999–2000

December 5, 2000

The Policy and Procedures concerning Sexual Harassment (adopted by the Council of the University Senate, May 8, 1990) require that an annual report be made to the Council (1) describing the University's program to prevent sexual harassment and (2) reviewing the incidents brought to the attention of the Sexual Harassment Complaint Advisors or the Panel on Sexual Harassment. This is the report for the year 1999–00.

Prevention and Education

The Sexual Harassment Complaint Advisors made ten presentations on the subject of sexual harassment to groups of faculty, students, and staff. Complaint Advisors gave presentations at many fall orientation programs for entering graduate students, tutors, and teaching assistants. Former Complaint Advisors gave several presentations to students in their own units. Although instances of sexual harassment at the University occasionally do arise, the students and staff who speak with Complaint Advisors seem reasonably well informed about the issues and their rights.

After nine years of successful operation, a sizable group of former Complaint Advisors exists, translating into additional presentations, primarily to students, courtesy of these veterans. Rotating individuals through two-year appointments as Complaint Advisors has resulted in the development of expertise and awareness among a growing number of individuals who continue to benefit the University community long after the two-year term has expired.

The pamphlet, *Sexual Harassment: What We Can Do*, was updated to indicate the names and telephone numbers of the new Complaint Advisors and to include the web addresses of the electronic versions of the pamphlet and the full University policy on sexual harassment. In addition to distributing the brochure to all students and to faculty with a memo from the Provost, we distribute the pamphlet to new staff as part of employee orientation and at sexual harassment workshops that are sponsored by Human Resources Management. The Complaint Advisors welcome suggestions about improving and handling of sexual harassment matters.

Monthly meetings remain central to the Complaint Advisors' efforts. Complaint Advisors discuss ways to serve a community effectively that is diverse culturally and in terms of sexual orientation. By sharing strategies that have helped resolve problematic situations, they benefit from each other's experiences. This year invited speakers included the Student Ombudsperson, a representative from the Office of Legal Counsel, the Coordinator of the Sexual Assault Dean-on-Call Program, and representatives from the Student Counseling & Resource Service and the School of Social Service Administration who shared their perspectives and expertise with the Complaint Advisors. Six new Complaint Advisors began their terms in the Spring Quarter, allowing for a six-month training period before their official listing as a University resource.

Formal and Informal "Cases"

Formal

This year there were no formal complaints of sexual harassment.

Informal

Eight incidents involved administrative intervention.

A female staff employee complained to a departmental administrator that a male faculty member had touched her inappropriately at work. The chair met with the faculty member, who had been reprimanded for similar conduct previously, and informed him that he could not return to work until the complaint had received a formal faculty panel review. The faculty member resigned from his position before the panel convened, and no further complaints have been made.

A minor male student complained to an administrator that a male staff member had made sexually explicit comments and touched him in a sexual way. The staff member was told that he could not return to work until the matter was resolved, and he resigned prior to the completion of the investigation.

A female staff employee complained to a faculty member that a male faculty supervisor had made repeated sexual comments

and inappropriate physical contact with her at a work-related off-campus event. The faculty supervisor, who had been reprimanded for similar conduct previously, offered that his comments were not meant to be offensive and his repeated touching had been unintentional. The chair reprimanded the faculty supervisor who resigned from his administrative duties. Also, the chair required the faculty supervisor to undergo counseling and warned him that any similar future complaint against him would warrant the severest sanctions.

A female student contacted an administrator about advice on how to stop a male former student from contacting her and sending her gifts. She was assisted in writing a letter to the individual, but when he ignored her explicit requests to cease communicating with her by taking a gift to her home, she sought and received further assistance in banning the former student from campus. When the former student violated the ban he was arrested for doing so. There has been no further complaint since that time.

A female student complained to an administrator that her unaffiliated male supervisor of a degree-related program had made inappropriate comments about the manner in which she dressed and had evaluated her program-related performance unfairly. The student's complaint was discussed with the Dean of Students, investigated, and an alternate supervisory arrangement was made for her. There have been no further complaints.

A female former staff member contacted a complaint advisor seeking to get a male academic employee who had given her romantic messages and gifts to stop doing so. The unit head met with the employee and explained that his attentions were unwanted by the former staff member, and the employee agreed to stop. No further complaints have been made.

A Complaint Advisor was contacted by a female staff member because a faculty member in her department had asked her out, and she was extremely uncomfortable declining his invitation. An administrator met with the faculty member and explained that the woman did not wish him to ask her out again and did not want to discuss the

matter with him. The faculty member agreed to the request and indicated that he had not intended to make her uncomfortable. There have been no further complaints.

A female student complained that male students in her department gave a presentation that was extremely derogatory to women. The Dean of Students investigated the report and agreed to provide more guidance for the student-led project in the future.

Questions and Related Matters

Current and former students, faculty, and staff consulted with Complaint Advisors on thirteen other matters. Typically, advice on next steps or approval of past efforts—rather than intervention—was sought and provided, and the individuals decided to proceed independently. Such conversations often help the individual examine the situation, weigh the alternatives, and decide on a course of action that brings the problem to a satisfactory resolution. Further assistance from the Complaint Advisors and the University is always available if a problem persists or resumes.

Of the thirteen contacts, five were made by individuals who complained of the generally abusive behavior of others or of questionable conduct in the workplace. Three contacts involved the misuse of the University's electronic technology, including accessing the Internet to create the appearance of its misuse by others. There were three requests for advice involving relationships with roommates/neighbors. One call was from a male student who thought he might be accused of sexual harassment and another from a male staff member who was uncomfortable about unwanted remarks made about his body by a female staff member.

Members of the Panel on Sexual Harassment

Kathleen Conzen, *Chair*
Charles Cohen
Anne Robertson
Michael Jerstad, Student Ombudsperson, *ex officio*
Aneesah Ali, Assistant Provost, *ex officio*

Report of the Panel on Sexual Harassment for 1998–99: Amendment

December 5, 2000

The Policy and Procedures concerning Sexual Harassment (adopted by the Council of the University Senate, May 8, 1990) require that an annual report be made to the Council. This is an amendment to the report for the year 1998–99.

Amendment to the 1998–99 Report: Additional 1998–99 "Cases"

Four complaints and three related matters were inadvertently omitted from the 1998–99 report on sexual harassment. Three of the cases involved complaints from female

students against male students because of unwanted sexual advances. In two cases, the Dean of Students spoke with the male student about his conduct, and in the third case another administrator spoke with the man. The fourth complaint was made by a female student whose male academic supervisor made repeated personal comments to her and spent their advising time attempting to socialize with her. She was counseled to talk with her chair who spoke with the faculty advisor and devised a suitable rearrangement of academic supervisory responsibility. The chair reminded the

faculty member of the expectation that he honor the relationship with which he is entrusted as a teacher of students and do nothing to create the appearance of favoritism or cast doubt on his intentions. There have been no further complaints.

The related matters also involved contacts from female students. In once instance, the woman sought assistance in getting her unaffiliated former boyfriend to stop his pursuit of her. The other two incidents were either mediated or dropped by the women.

Members of the Panel on Sexual Harassment

Kathleen Conzen, *Chair*
Charles Cohen
Anne Robertson
Andrew Swartz, Student Ombudsperson, *ex officio*
Aneesah Ali, Assistant Provost, *ex officio*

Report of the Student Ombudsperson for Spring Quarter 2000

By Mike Jerstad

Although a description of the Office of the Student Ombudsperson (the “Office”) was given in our last report, we feel that a reiteration of our function is warranted. The Office serves two primary functions: (1) to assist students with their questions or problems regarding University bureaucratic matters, administration, faculty, or staff; and (2) to help students work through personal problems they may have with fellow students or others, academic crises, or other issues that may surface during the course of the academic year. The Office continued to see a wide variety of cases during the Spring Quarter. There was, however, a shift in the substantive bases of these complaints. Although there was a marked decrease in complaints about grades and academic problems from the Winter Quarter (from seven to two), there was an increase in direct problems with professors. Furthermore, there was a greater instance of random administrative complaints. Most troubling, however, was the increase in problems students reported with fellow students, from zero to three. The overall occurrence of complaints was about the same as during the Winter Quarter.

Academic Matters

Problems with Professors and Grades

During the Spring Quarter, students continued to complain about problems with professors and the grades they gave. The problem of failure to report grades in a timely manner resurfaced, as did a disagreement with a professor about a grade she gave a student. In the latter instance, a College student went to confront the professor about a grade she received. The student insisted to our Office that she had not been belligerent, and that she had acted professionally during the meeting. The professor, however, was defensive about the student’s complaint, and the meeting degenerated into an uncomfortable and unproductive affair. (The student did not want the Office to take any action, but rather just wanted to talk about the incident.)

A word of qualification must be offered before we make a general comment regarding student-professor relations. Our Office often hears only one side of the story—the student’s. Accordingly, there may be other aspects of each situation that would shed light on the true nature of the dispute. With that said, however, we would like to emphasize to professors how important grades are to students—not only their dispensation, but their prompt reporting as well.

Regarding grade dispensation, professors should not be defensive if students wish to discuss the grades they received. In fact, this Office believes it should be a student’s right to do so, so long as the student does so with proper deference and acknowledgement of a professor’s right to make relatively unfettered subjective determinations. Indeed, it is probably true that most professors are happy to discuss grades with their students. Professors must understand, however, how important it is to report students’ grades to the Registrar in a timely manner. Students are constantly applying for scholarships, programs abroad, and graduate programs: failure to submit grades promptly can jeopardize a

student’s chance at admission. In short, professors must never forget how important grades are to students, even if students may seem overly concerned about them.

Problems with Graduate Advisers

Our Office saw three students who had had problems with their graduate advisers. This is a troubling development. Advisers hold a unique position of trust with students, and students rely on them heavily for advice and guidance. When this relationship breaks down, a student’s experience at the University may become severely impaired. For example, one student approached our Office complaining that her adviser had railroaded her into a program to which she had not applied, for the express purpose of not having to provide the student with the funds she needed to continue her education. The student raised the issue with her adviser, who denied the accusation and then, according to the student’s suspicions, expressed her discontent with the student to other members of the faculty. Another student complained that her adviser’s negative comments on her work were merely a pretext for the real reason (again, related to funding) the adviser was not an advocate of the student’s admission into a program to which she was applying.

The point of these anecdotes is not to take sides, nor is it to dig into the substantive allegations of the students’ claims (the nature of which vastly exceeds the scope of this report). Rather, it is to offer a few pieces of advice to both sides. Graduate advisers must be open with their students at all times. If they feel students’ work is substandard, they should not lull students into believing it is not and then spring their real opinions at inopportune times. In addition, advisors *must* be honest, regardless of the political implications. Students are not clueless—they can generally tell when they are being lied to.

On the other hand, students must regularly seek out evaluations from their advisers and carefully document these sessions. This will serve two purposes. First, it will provide students with a regular assessment of their work. In addition, it will serve as documentation in the event the adviser makes an *ex post facto* claim that the student’s work has always been subpar. Students, if they are upset with their advisers, must also consider the long-term implications of their actions when deciding how to approach their advisers about their concerns. Even if the student believes her or his adviser acted impudently or even unethically, they must also consider the possibility that they may need to call on that adviser again for assistance or even recommendations and temper their confrontations as such.

Administrative Matters

As in the Winter Quarter, there was a hodgepodge of administrative complaints during the Spring Quarter without any underlying theme or trend about which to be overly concerned. In one instance, a graduate student who performed a function for the student body was having difficulty establishing productive ties of communication with an administrator with whom he regularly consulted. After having met with the student and with them both,

Case Statistics for Winter Quarter 2000

Academic	
Problems with Advisers	3
Problems with Professors	2
Problems with Grades	2
Administrative	
Financial Aid	1
Library	1
Miscellaneous	4
Student Life	
Residential	2
RSO	1
Other Students	3
Discipline	
	1
Health	
	3
Miscellaneous	
	2
Total	25

the reason for this dilemma became clear: neither party appeared willing to compromise. This sounds like a penetrating recognition of the obvious, and perhaps it is. We believe, however, that in the extremely political setting of a university, compromise—and a genuine effort at understanding why the other party feels the way he or she does—is essential to achieving the goals of both. As a new administration takes over, it remains to be seen whether the parties will resolve their differences.

Two students complained of University-imposed fees: one for missing a dissertation deadline, and one for not returning “recalled” books. Having had to pay administrative fees for one thing or another, we can understand these students’ frustrations. The University is in a position of strength when it comes to fee enforcement—pay them or you cannot register, you will not get your grades, or you won’t be able to graduate. We believe, however, that the University should do its best to mitigate the hardship on cash-strapped students by reducing fees whenever possible. In the case of the recalled books, the student’s fee was reduced from \$200 to \$25 through the student’s persistence (although the student still felt that he should not have had to pay the fee). Though some fees will not be reduced no matter how much a student pleads, discretionary fees may be reduced due to exigent circumstances, and students should persist whenever they feel they are justified.

Student Life

Another trend the Office found troubling was the increase in complaints within this category. Although it is never good to see a rise in complaints, those complaints that affect a student’s ability to live life outside of the academic and administrative realm we find to be particularly troubling.

Residential and RSO Issues

One student complained of the vagueness of the policy at the Reynolds Club for

setting up tables to distribute information to fellow students. At the time of this complaint, the policy was evolving and, we would imagine, has since evolved. However, it essentially allowed three categories of “vendors” to occupy space: commercial, art, and recruiting. Although the student’s organization seemed to fit clearly within one of these categories, he was initially denied a space to set up shop based on what this Office believes to be a poor interpretation of vaguely drafted guidelines. This brings home an important point that transcends Reynolds Club-specific issues: policies such as these need to be *clearly* set out and *consistently applied*, and there needs to be a procedure in place for students who feel they have been treated unfairly.

As an aside, the aggrieved student sent several e-mails and made several inquiries before he was responded to; this was part of the student’s frustration and complaint to our Office. An important lesson can be learned from this, and applies not only to University administration, but to us all: *respond to people who leave messages for you!* It is not only inconsiderate not to, but it is a good way to damage friendships and burn bridges.

Another complaint we had was related to residence hall life. Several students were accused of vandalizing a residence hall. They felt, however, that there was unjust finger-pointing, and that they were not the only ones responsible for the damage that occurred and should not be required to pay the entirety of the repair cost. After several weeks of investigation and meetings, the Office was unable to determine whether the students’ claims had merit due to the “he said, she said” nature of the allegations from both sides. In working through these issues with these students, however, we felt that the process of claim prosecution could have been better.

Specifically, the students were not given line-item statements showing what they allegedly broke and how much each item would cost to repair; there appeared to be a rebuttable presumption of the students’ guilt rather than their innocence; and the students felt that they had been singled out because of a vendetta on the part of a Resident Assistant. Indeed, we believe that a large portion of the students’ complaint was due not to the truth or falsity of the allegations against them, but rather to the way they were treated throughout the process. The problem of conflicting accounts resulting in a disputed judgment will never go away. What can be addressed, however, is, once again, the *process* for claim prosecution and resolution.

Problems with Fellow Students

The Office saw an increase in problems students had with fellow members of the University community. In one instance, a student complained of repeated emotional and psychological abuse by another person in the University community. The Office believes that claims of this nature represent some of the most difficult to process. Competing interests exist. On one hand, the behavior is wrong and should be stopped, and direct intervention is therefore tempting. Yet the Office must maintain the confidentiality that students demand when they step into the Office to discuss their prob-

lems. Even if the student gives the Office direct permission to process the claim by contacting the person committing the alleged abuse or by talking to an administration official, the rights of the accused must be respected as well. The Office often hears one-sided accounts. No matter how legitimate they may sound, they may be inflated due to the emotion students often feel when they discuss their problems. It would not be fair to assume the entire account is correct without doing serious due diligence.

Once this has been done, however, another problem then arises: what kind of conduct is actionable? Someone cannot be disciplined for being a jerk or for being mean. But when does this behavior cross the line into harassment or even violence? How can future, more serious problems be averted? Here is how the Office feels these situations can be handled. We strongly encourage students who have complaints such as these to visit the Office to discuss them. With the help of the Office, the situation should be monitored closely, even on a week-by-week basis, to help gauge the behavior of the given individual. Of course, predicting when mean behavior can turn

harassing or violent is difficult. If meanness turns to harassment, however, help can be given by the administration to separate the harassing individual from the student with the threat of serious punishment if such an order is violated. If there are any threats of violence, though, however veiled, the student should inform the Office *and* go immediately to the University Police, and not in that order. Although the Office can help students in the initial stages of such a problem, it cannot serve as a substitute for the police in situations where a student's physical well-being is threatened.

Student Health

The Office heard several problems from students related to health care. One problem that arose related to insurance: a student was unable to get reimbursement for his prescription drugs, although they were clearly covered under his plan. He had made repeated attempts to do so. After making several calls and meeting with certain individuals, the Office feels that the problem existed due to the bureaucracy inherent in the insurance industry, as well as a campus office that appeared to be unin-

dated to the extent that it made it difficult to process all students' claims in a timely manner. In fact, we attempted to solve the student's problem by obtaining the proper forms for the student and advising him where to send them *himself*. This is troubling—students who purchase the health plan should not have to spend hours of their time weaving through bureaucracy in order to have their claims processed properly. Although, as a former Ombudsperson, I cannot speak to the current state of the campus office that handles these claims, I believe that the addition of another staff member may have solved the problem that existed when this complaint was brought to the Office's attention in May.

Other complaints related to emergency room billing and confusion at the Student Care Center. However, a common theme ran throughout these complaints and the insurance issue: some students feel that they are not being provided good "customer service" when it comes to health care on campus. We are not suggesting that any behavior by the people responsible for these complaints was intentionally malicious. Rather, we believe that health issues are

particularly sensitive to money-strapped and health-conscious students, and must be treated accordingly. By promptly following up with insurance claims, billing clearly and carefully, and immediately fielding complaints from aggrieved students, the campus health care system will improve students' image of it and improve the quality of their care within it as well.

Finally, the Office fielded a few "parking ticket" issues as well—those over which the Office has no control. Again, we would like to close by emphasizing two things. First, but not foremost, issues such as disputes with McDonald's about the quality of their french fries or arguments with the city about parking tickets are not within the purview of this Office. With that said, however, if there is any doubt as to whether we can help, assume that we can. The Office of the Student Ombudsperson serves as a resource to all students and encourages them to utilize the Office to its fullest potential.

Mike Jerstad was the Student Ombudsperson for the 1999–2000 academic year.

Report of the Office of the Student Ombudsperson for 2000–01

By Gabriel Rhoads and Michael Bloom

Introduction

The Office of the Student Ombudsperson exists to research queries and complaints of the University student community. At times, the concerns that bring individuals into the Office fall outside our capacity to investigate. Of the cases in which we may affect change, some take only a few phone calls to resolve, while others require more extensive attention.

Fairness and respect are the guiding principles of the Office. When confronted with a problem, we attempt, to the best of our ability and operating within the constraints of confidentiality, to understand the positions of all of the parties involved. The Office does not blindly advocate for students, just as it does not offer uncritical interpretations of judgements made by officials of the University. Neither approach would be effective or serve to forward the primary goal of the Office, that is, to find solutions that are acceptable to all.

Most problems brought to the Office are the results of miscommunication. This report highlights sources of confusion within the University community in the interest of minimizing their future occurrence. The initial part of the report focuses on several of the most resonant miscommunications that were brought to the attention of the Office. The report then continues, touching upon a few cases to illustrate key student concerns.

Course Expectations

Misunderstandings between professors and students surrounding course expectations

proved to be one of the major sources of frustration for the individuals who came into the Office. This demonstrates the importance of the syllabus as a mode of communication between students and professors. Before opting to register, students review the requirements and expectations of a potential course. If these are deemed to be suitable, they may decide to select the class. For this reason it is important to adhere to two principles:

1. Requirements and expectations should be made clear in the initial add/drop period of the course, and
2. requirements and expectations should remain consistent later in the course.

An exception to the second point could arise from an open conversation between the students and the instructor. Since, after the initial selection period, students are bound to finish the course or withdraw, an agreement should be reached with the understanding that the students are "captive" to any changes. This conversation would be appropriate in person or over e-mail; the important element is that decisions not be made without input.

Some examples will serve to illustrate the principles outlined above. Clarity in course description becomes problematic when specific elements of the class are left ambiguous. In three cases this year, students approached the Office after confusion arose regarding a "participation" grade. In at least two of these three situations, an elaboration by the professor as to his or her understanding of the content of "good participation," such as attendance

or contribution in class discussion, would have dispelled the problem.

In one case, participation was not even identified as an evaluated element of the course until a summary was given explaining the final mark. This underscores a need for consistency, as described in the second principle. The student in this case was not under the impression that contribution to class discussion would affect the final grade. If an outline of the grading structure of a given class includes a percentage breakdown of the relative weight of various grades, in the interest of not misleading students, that grading structure should be maintained intact in the final calculation. It is important to note that the final mark is intended to reflect the professor's impression of student performance. It is critical not to confine the professor's ability to fulfill this capacity. However, if the final grade is going to consist of criteria in addition to a direct calculation of the marks earned during the course, the initial course outline should probably not rely upon a formula.

Furthermore, changes in course requirements should be made with care. If students are subjected to an increased work load late in the class, they may feel that they were misled by the initial description. Conversely, although arguments over dropping a course element are rare, it may still be important to discuss this decision with the class. A student may feel that he or she will perform better on future course work, and removing the opportunity to submit additional materials may be problematic.

The purpose of the above comments is not to confine the format of the initial presentation of a course, nor is it to constrain subsequent flexibility in the way that courses are structured. The Office would simply urge sensitivity both in giving potential students as much information as possible about the expectations of the course, and, if changes are made, in making sure that students are well informed of the new format.

Formal Communication

Problems in communication will sometimes still arise when information is unambiguously available. Some of the cases investigated this year demonstrate that it is valuable for students to read critically the correspondence they receive. Issues arise when formal letters are ignored or insufficiently reviewed by students or other members of the University community. It is, as always, of vital importance for students to pay close attention to the communications not only from professors, but also the administration.

In addition, over the past few years, e-mail has emerged as an efficient and effective way to communicate information. However, the medium is not without its difficulties. At times, erratic patterns of reviewing messages have confounded delivery of time-sensitive memos. Furthermore, the tone of a message is sometimes perceived as curt or dismissive, even when that was not the intent of the sender. In several instances this year, the reliance upon e-mail as a sole venue for communication

has created difficulties in understanding. E-mail is now considered correspondence of record. It is important to at once take electronic communication seriously, but also to have flexibility to clarify meaning and settle confusion that may arise from its use.

Should a problem arise in the exchange of formal communication, there are resources available to assist with a resolution. Several cases this year exemplify this difficulty, including disputes over billing, insurance coverage, financial aid requirements, and the like. There are officials who exist to investigate inconsistencies, be it with the Bursar, Library, Hospitals, or other elements of the University. If a problem occurs while exchanging messages with a professor or administrator, the Ombudsperson can be engaged to help develop a solution and restore the lines of communication.

Mental Health Issues on Campus

There have been several instances where complaints raised by students were related to mental health. While the issues were diverse, they point to a need for the University community to be aware of the mental health concerns that affect the lives of some of its citizens. In a case where a mental health problem may potentially interfere with academics or participation in the University, students should approach their current professors, academic adviser, Dean of Students, or the Student Counseling & Resource Service (SCRS). However, as some students report, bringing such concerns to light is not always positively received. At times, troublesome or counterproductive situations can stem from the revelation of a mental health disorder. If students expect a supportive, flexible, and open-minded reception, more issues regarding mental health may be successfully presented, and solutions sought, before a problem arises.

University Announcements

The alteration of the registration process in the College provides an interesting case study in effective communication about policy shifts. The registration change includes the implementation of an electronic system and shortening of the add/drop period. The shift in policy caused some students to approach the Office curious about the reasons behind its occurrence. Upon investigation, the rationale behind the modification was compelling and well thought through. The most important of several offered reasons is that the change will positively affect the amount of time that academic advisers can spend getting to know and providing valuable advice to students. There have been complaints in the past regarding the effectiveness of advisers in the College. The technical elements of this transition free advisers from the mundane tasks of registration and enable them to focus on students' more individualized need. Unfortunately, this positive consequence was not fully explained to students as a component of the alteration of the process. Students were left with a challenging new system (making course selection choices in 60 percent of the time) without having a good understanding of the potential benefits.

In investigating numerous policies at the University level, it becomes clear that there

Case Statistics for 2000-01 as of April 30, 2001

Academic Affairs	31
Grade Appeals	17
Policy Inquiries	10
Other	4
Student Affairs	39
Insurance	5
Hospitals/Health Center	2
Mental Health	2
Health Fee	2
Student Activities	6
Housing	16
Athletics/Clubs	3
Student Employment	2
Legal Problems	1
Administrative Affairs	13
Bursar's Office	3
Financial Aid	6
Facilities	2
Transportation/Busing	1
Other	1
Miscellaneous	5
Counseling	2
Query	3

is usually a reason behind the way a procedure is implemented. Often, when policy alterations are made, the reasons are communicated along with the announcement. This practice helps avert debate and confusion. In the case above, the students who were apprised of the reasons were satisfied with the explanation. We believe that the rationale for altering policies is a helpful accompaniment to descriptions of policy change.

Additional Comments: Housing and Finances

There were a variety of other concerns brought to the Office over the past academic year. Of the most prominent were issues related to housing. This is not surprising, because a large part of student life is concerned with rooming arrangements. Several of the queries stemmed from difficulties with non-University housing and management companies outside the ability of the Office to adjudicate. Students were concerned with mistreatment at the hands of landlords. One student was subject to a fine with no apparent recourse for appeal. Another was subject to an eviction that he felt was unfair and arbitrary. At one point, the allegation was made that the University may have played some role in serving the eviction notice. It is a common belief that the University has some control over off-campus realtors. After investigating this possibility, the Office of the Ombudsperson concluded that the University has no such connection with off-campus housing sources. Furthermore, it is in the interest of the University to see its students treated well, remaining in their apartments, so they may effectively pursue their studies on campus. To this end, the University maintains a

Communities Served

College	55
Graduate Divisions	20
Social Sciences	8
Humanities	6
Physical Sciences	3
Other	3
Professional Schools	7
Divinity School	4
Graduate School of Business	2
Medical School	1
Faculty	1
Alumni	3
Community	3
Total	89

relationship with the South East Chicago Commission (SECC), which offers assistance with a wide range of legal questions, including housing affairs. We referred several cases to the SECC with favorable results over the past year.

Of the housing concerns that occurred inside the University, all were quickly settled to the satisfaction of all parties with the help of the undergraduate and graduate housing offices. One graduate student contacted our Office seeking compensation for damage to property due to pest control problems in her apartment. When approached, Real Estate Operations was supportive and granted a release from the last month of rent to cover the damages that occurred during this uncommon incident. The student was happy with this solution, as it approximately covered the cost of the furniture that an exterminator suggested be discarded. Undergraduate concerns mostly involved questions about the policies regarding their housing contracts. The housing office was supportive of students seeking to change location for quality of life issues. The existing waiting list for room transfers may, in extenuating circumstances, be trumped. If a student desires a rapid change in his or her current living arrangement, this may be achieved without much trouble. One individual occasioned a review of the policy that requires first-year College students to live in University housing. It is a common belief that this is a financial decision on behalf of the University. However, this decision is not made by the housing office, it is instead a policy of the College, designed to foster a sense of class cohesion in the first year of study. The housing office is merely the executor of this policy. Questions regarding the nature of the policy were successfully directed to the Office of the Dean of Students in the College.

Financial concerns also figure highly in student life and bring several complainants to the Office. A large number of the complaints arose from concerns about erroneous or unexpected billing, predominantly by

Distribution of Cases

Autumn Quarter	39
Winter Quarter	24
Spring Quarter (as of April 30, 2001)	26

the hospital system. Issues related to insurance coverage and the scope of services provided by the Student Health Fee are notoriously complicated. Since the medical staff are not insurance experts, students should contact the Student Care Center or Student Health Insurance office to make sure that procedures are covered. As a general rule, the Student Health Fee covers appointments with practitioners but does not cover procedures or tests.

Billing issues often ricochet throughout the system, overwhelming students who don't know where to begin attacking a problem or whom to call. Overdue tuition bills cause the suspension of library privileges or delay grants. Insurance complications send hospital bills to collection agencies. Billing issues should be tackled immediately. Because doing so takes time, it is tempting to ignore them and simply "wish" them away. The Office of the Student Ombudsperson can help sort through the confusion, engaging the right people to solve complex problems.

Conclusion

The Office of the Ombudsperson acts as a clearinghouse for all sources of confusion. From sensitive questions regarding RSO participation, to simple queries of policy, we encourage students to approach us even if they are unsure that we can help. If the Office is unable to assist in finding a resolution, then we can help locate relevant resources.

Over the course of the year in the Office, we found the faculty and administration generally receptive and flexible when presented with compelling concerns. We would like to applaud the supportive efforts of students, faculty, and administration that helped in the resolution of this year's cases. Lastly, we would like to especially extend the gratitude of the Office to two members of the University community who have been particularly helpful for many years. In their final quarter working with the Ombudsperson, we wish to acknowledge the wisdom of both Dean Turkington and Dean Nash, which has shaped the successful resolution of many troubling student concerns.

Gabriel Rhoads is the Ombudsperson and Michael Bloom is the Assistant Ombudsperson for the 2000-01 academic year.

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