



Student Advocacy Annual Report

2005-2006
2006-2007

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Student Advocacy office is to ensure that students are treated fairly in their dealings with the University. The Student Advocacy office is dedicated to educating the University community concerning student rights and responsibilities and assisting students in the resolution of conflicts arising from actions or decisions taken by the University.

While serving the University, Student Advocates maintain a student focus by providing information, investigating complaints, resolving conflict through alternative and formal systems, representing students at hearings, and reviewing policies and recommending change.

Introduction

This edition of the Student Advocacy office Annual Report, submitted to Senate, summarizes the activities of the office from September 1, 2005 to August 31, 2006 and from September 1, 2006 to August 31, 2007. We have submitted this report for two consecutive reporting years, due to a change that took place to our file management system in September 2007. Analyzing and summarizing the data for these two years allowed for easier comparison and presentation of information. In addition, subsequent years' reports may have additional information to be presented that would be best served in a new format.

Contacts

In 2005-2006, the Student Advocacy office received 1960 contacts, the breakdown of which is shown in Table 1. These statistics represent an increase from the 2004-5005 reporting year. The office opened case files to assist 1090 individual students. There were 14 cases from 2004-2005 year that were carried forward either because the student's appeal was pending or the issue was ongoing. There were 7 group cases which were handled by the advocates (see glossary).

For the 2006-2007 year, there were a total of 1910 contacts to the Student Advocacy (please see Table 1 for breakdown). There were individual case files opened for 978 students. There were 11 group cases.

Where case files were not opened, these students were given preliminary information and/or advice by the front desk upon their initial contact to the office. The information given may have sufficiently addressed the matter they presented and there was no need to make an appointment with an advocate. For other students who made contact and arranged an appointment, the student may have either

cancelled or chose not to attend the appointment. In these situations as well, students would have been given information and advice in their initial contact which may have resulted in the student no longer needing the meeting with the advocate. For some of these students, the issue may have been resolved subsequent to their scheduling of the appointment and for others their circumstances may have prevented them from following through with the appointment at that time.

One of the ways that students are increasingly accessing information is through the internet. As a result, our staff have been working on specific projects aimed at updating and improving our website so there is more information available to students through that medium. For issues such as grade appeals and authorized withdrawals (two of the main issues student contact about), we included sections where students can find out information about the steps to follow when making that particular appeal/request, as well as detailed sample letter outlines to follow when preparing a written appeal/request. There is also information directing them as to where their appeal/request should be submitted. Not only does this type of information address the common questions that students initially have, it allows them to prepare drafts of their letters prior to appointments with an advocate. This can help facilitate the meeting as well as expedite the submission of their appeal/request.

There were also updates made to the organization of the webpage to make specific information easier to locate, such as the services we provide, research and resource information that is available, as well as special events such as Academic Integrity Week. In addition, we have also created separate sections with information that is applicable to students and to faculty and/or staff.

Consultation with faculty and staff is another way in which we extend our support of students. The Director and the Advocates consulted with staff (academic, support and administrative) who contacted the office for advice on various student matters and procedural issues. Although this number decreased in 2005-06 from the previous year, this can be explained by the Student Affairs restructuring. The Executive Director of Student Services (the former Director of Student Advocacy and Resource Services) continues to consult with staff about student matters. For the 2005-06 reporting year, her total number of consults was 78, and 75 for the 2006-07 reporting year. This accounts for the difference in the number of staff consults recorded by Student Advocacy for the 2004-05 year and these two reporting years.

Table 1: Total Contact 2006-2007 and 2005-2006

	2006 2007	2005 2006	2004 2005
Individual Student Cases	978	1090	949
Carried Forward Student Cases	23	14	23
Student Contacts	751	718	516
Group/Issues Cases	11	7	6
Staff Consults	147	131	211
Total	1910	1960	1705

Demographics

For these reporting years, there were slightly more female students than male students who had case files opened (49% and 47% male and 51% and 53% females, respectively). Overall, two thirds of our caseload is represented by four faculties (University 1, Science, Arts, and Graduate Studies). This is consistent with the enrollment numbers for those faculties and comparable to the 2004-2005 statistics.

Categorizing of Issues

In 2005-2006 there were a total of **1133** issues that were handled by the student advocates. The issues and concerns brought forward to the office continue to be sorted into five main categories: academic (**65%**), discipline (**19%**), administrative (**13%**), admissions (**2%**), and equity (**1%**). There was a slight shift in categories from the previous year. In this reporting year, discipline cases comprised the second largest percentage of issues, whereas in 2004-2005, administrative issues were the second largest component. One of the mandates of the office is to educate the U of M community about issues such as academic integrity. It is possible that this contributed to the increase in our discipline cases this year. Administrators may have gained an increased awareness of our office as a resource for students who are accused of academic dishonesty, and thus are referring students to us and handling academic dishonesty cases according to the appropriate procedures in the Student Discipline By-Law.

In 2006-2007, there were a total of **1186** issues that were handled by the student advocates. The category breakdown was consistent with years previous to 2005-2006, with academic representing the most common category of issue (**68%**), administrative being the second most common issue (**16%**), followed by discipline (**12%**), admissions (**2%**), equity (**2%**).

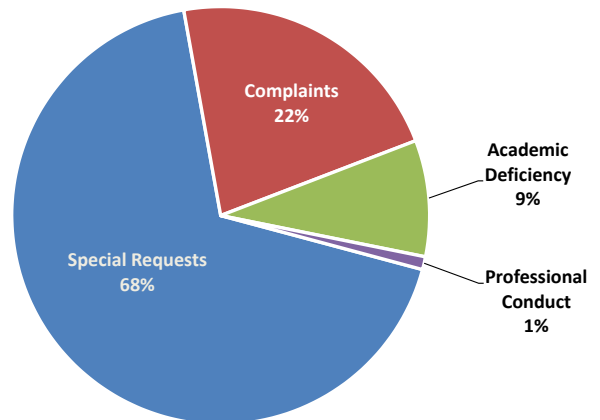
One important note regarding the equity category is that over time, there has been an increase in the number of issues identified under this category. This is largely due to

more issues coming forward under the Respectful Work and Learning Environment policy. (Please see the description below for details).

Academic Issues

Concerns categorized as academic issues represent the largest proportion of cases; 65% of the caseload for 2005-2006 and 68% of the caseload in 2006-07. Within this category, we further divide the types of issues, as seen in Figure 1. In both reporting years, the percentages for each category are comparable.

Figure 1: Academic Issues 2006 - 2007



Special requests comprise the main type of academic concern for both reporting years (64% and 68%, respectively). These involve cases where a student makes a request for an academic concession or an exception to a rule, usually based on compassionate and/or medical grounds. Examples of this may include withdrawals, deferrals, incompletes, extensions, leaves of absence, or waivers of program rules. As is consistent with previous years, the majority of special requests were for Authorized Withdrawals and Deferred Exams. There was an increase in special requests for 2006-07 due to the updated Aurora registration system implemented this year. With the new system, students may only be permitted to repeat a course once. Therefore, there were more formal requests needed for students wanting to repeat a course for a second time. There were 8 such requests in 2006-07.

The **complaint** category is the next largest type of academic concern (26% and 22%, respectively). This is a diverse category including dissatisfaction with faculty/staff or with policies and regulations. Appeals of decisions are commonly seen within this category. Complaints also include situations where students have a concern about their program or policies and seek clarification of their rights in various situations.

Grade appeals make up the majority of issues within this category for both reporting years. We have continued with the approach of disseminating information to students about the process of filing grade appeals by setting up a poster display which contains general information on filing a grade appeal as well as general information on the website. In addition, this year we added this information to our website (as described previously).

The next three largest issues under the complaint category for both reporting years are “general information and advising”, “student/professor conflict”, and “student/advisor” conflict. This latter category applies to graduate students and advisors.

Last year, we added a new issue under this category called “Accommodations”. Issues regarding accommodations can include complaints about existing accommodations or requests for various types of accommodations. Most students in these situations would receive information and be referred to Disability Services. In some cases, the advocates would work with staff from Disability Services to gather information or mediate a concern. In 2005-2006, we had 9 Accommodations issues and there were 3 issues in 2006-2007.

The third main type of academic concern category is called **academic deficiency** and includes cases where a student has not met the minimum academic requirements for their program. This can result in probation, suspension, ineligible to proceed and withdrawal from their faculty. This comprised 8% and 9% of cases in each reporting year, respectively.

The final category of academic concern pertains to **professional conduct** (2% and 1%, respectively). This is distinguished from behaviour in a discipline matter, in that the behaviour is related to an academic program or professional program standards. Examples of this include debarment from courses or programs, or withdrawal due to professional unsuitability. This category mainly applies to professional programs, where clinical or field work is a required component.

Discipline Issues

Disciplinary cases comprised 19% of the total issues presented in 2005-2006 and 12% of the issues in 2006-07. It is important to note that disciplinary issues were the second largest issue category in the 2005-06 reporting year. This category includes not only academic discipline (i.e., academic dishonesty cases) but also non-academic discipline cases (i.e., inappropriate or disruptive student behaviour).

Matters involving academic dishonesty made up the majority of the discipline cases seen at Student Advocacy. There was a substantial increase in the number of academic dishonesty issues in 2005-06 compared to the year previous. The breakdown of these issues is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Academic Discipline	2006	2005	2004
	2007	2006	2005
Cheating	40	79	59
Plagiarism	60	59	44
Inappropriate Collaboration	14	45	12
False Admissions Information	2	12	4
False Documentation (e.g. falsified medical notes)	2	5	3
Academic Fraud	2	2	1
Total	120	202	123

The category “cheating” had the most concerns for both 2004-05 and 2005-06. One of the trends that became apparent during 2004-2005 involved students having unauthorized materials, in the form of cell phones or electronic translators, in a test or exam situation. For 2005-2006 although there were fewer overall cases involving unauthorized material, there was not a significant difference in our records between electronic and non-electronic materials being brought into the exam. Of the 25 cases involving bringing in unauthorized material, 9 were for electronic devices, and 9 were for non electronic devices such as notes (7 were unspecified).

As a result of this trend, for the 2006-07 reporting year, we created a specific category to allow us to more accurately record cases of “unauthorized material”. Our numbers indicated that there were 6 cases in 2006-07, half of which were for electronic devices. This is a significant decrease from the previous year. One possible explanation for this trend is due in part to the increased attention given to this issue in tests and exams. There are announcements made by professors, signage in all examination rooms, and educational initiatives undertaken by our office. Anecdotally, our experience in 2005-06 was that many of the students were unintentionally bringing in electronic devices. For example, students having their cell phone with them because they use it as a watch to keep track of the time.

As can be seen from Table 2, the number of plagiarism cases was similar for both reporting years. This plateau of plagiarism cases may in part be a result of the various initiatives Student Advocacy has undertaken to educate students about plagiarism. The increase in numbers when compared to the 2004-05 year may be due to increased

consultation and education of faculty members and administrators in terms of following the Student Discipline By-Law and referring students to our office for assistance when accused of plagiarism. As a result, faculty members in general are more aware of the issue of plagiarism. In addition, some faculties have undertaken their own initiatives to educate students about academic integrity, as well as informing their faculty members about management of suspected cases of plagiarism and other academic dishonesty matters.

There was a significant increase in the number of inappropriate collaboration cases we saw in 2005-2006. These are cases where students work together on an assignment when individual work is expected. This is a type of academic dishonesty that tends to be less clear to students and as a result, students may inadvertently engage in inappropriate collaboration. Our office plays an educational role in these types of cases in addition to assisting students being investigated for inappropriate collaboration. For the 2006-07 year, the number of inappropriate collaboration cases is comparable to the 2004-2005 year, as can be seen in Table 2.

Non-academic discipline matters tend to fall along a spectrum of behaviours, from rude or uncivil behaviour, to disruptive or harassing behavior and to violent and threatening behaviour. Our office's role in these issues can be both consultative and educational. We often help staff and faculty with how to respond to this type of behaviour and how they could discipline students depending on where the behaviour falls along this spectrum. We also work at educating students about appropriate behaviour, through workshops and orientations. This topic was also included in the video produced for the U1 orientation sessions. The overall number of non-academic misconduct cases seen in our office in these two reporting years was comparable (15 in 2005-2006 and 21 in 2006-2007). The main categories of these issues are inappropriate or disruptive behaviour and residence discipline matters. Table 3 provides the numbers for these reporting years.

Table 3: Non-Academic Discipline	2006 - 2007	2005 - 2006	2004 - 2005
Inappropriate or disruptive behaviour	4	3	6
Inappropriate computer use	2	0	2
Residence discipline	9	10	3
Other	6	2	4
Total	21	15	15

Although the overall numbers of non-academic discipline do not make up a large percentage of our caseload, these types of issues and behaviours are serious and can have serious implications for students, staff, and the overall campus community. Therefore, it is important that educational efforts are aimed at increasing awareness of appropriate conduct on campus.

Some issues involving inappropriate or disruptive student behaviour are brought forth to our office for consultation by the Director of the office and/or the Executive Director of Student Services. These issues are not necessarily represented in our caseload numbers, as a file may not be opened for all case consultations. As mentioned previously, with the restructuring of Student Affairs in 2005, consultation with individuals in these two positions allows for a separation in the level at which the consultation can occur (i.e., Executive Director and Director levels). However, there is still opportunity for overlap in how these two directors work together and provide integrated responses to faculty and staff.

In 2005-2006, there were 5 such consults and in 2006-2007, there were 8 consults. Generally, these issues involve disruptive student behaviour and/or students in crisis.

Administrative Issues

Administrative issues comprised 13% and 16% of the concerns that students were assisted with over both reporting years, respectively. This category mainly includes fee appeals (filed through the Registrar's Office) and issues with course registration. This category also includes a wide array of issues that do not directly affect a student's continuation in an academic program (e.g., removal of a transcript notation) or fall outside the jurisdiction of the university (e.g., immigration concerns).

Admission Issues

Admissions cases are also a component of the Student Advocacy caseload, as the advocates work with potential students as well as current or former students. In both reporting years, admissions issues represented 2% of our total caseload. This category mainly encompasses appeals of admissions decisions.

Equity Issues

Finally, equity issues continue to comprise a small, yet growing, category of student concerns (1% in 2005-2006 and 2% in 2006-07). In the 05R annual report, it was noted that under the Respectful Work and Learning Environment (RWLE) policy, our office was mandated to resolve infor-

mal complaints of Personal Harassment and it was expected that the number of these cases would increase. This was our experience in both reporting years.

There were 10 personal harassment cases opened in 2005-06 and 15 cases in 2006-07, compared to 5 cases in 2004-05. These are matters where a student or staff may bring forward a concern of personal harassment by another person on campus. Alternatively, this can be a situation where a complaint of personal harassment is made against a student.

In the 2005-06 personal harassment cases, one investigation occurred as an informal complaint by the student, two cases were referred to Equity Services, while the rest were given information and advice pertaining to their options under this policy.

In 2006-07, of the 15 personal harassment cases, 12 were cases where a complaint was made against a student (10 were due to cyberbullying). In terms of resolution over all these cases, 7 of these students were given information and advice from our office under the RWLE policy, 6 students had an advocate attend a meeting with an investigator, and 2 students were referred to Equity Services.

Resolution of Issues

When assisting students with their concerns or issues, our goal is to resolve the matter at the lowest level possible. We define this as an informal resolution to a case. However, cases involving formal requests or appeals require a formal resolution process.

Informal

In both reporting years, the majority of our cases were resolved informally (67% in 2005-2006 and 63% in 2006-2007). Table 4 provides further breakdown of the types of services provided. The majority of the cases that were resolved informally were situations in which the advocate provided the student with information and advice, made a request on the student's behalf, or mediated a resolution on behalf of the student. For the remainder of cases that were resolved informally, students were either directed to another office to receive assistance or the students, or after writing a letters of request or appeal, chose not to pursue the matter.

Table 4: Informal Resolution of Cases	2006-2007	2005-2006
Information and advice	80%	72%
Request or mediate	20%	28%

Formal

A smaller number of cases are handled through formal avenues. The advocates always encourage resolution of issues at the lowest possible level. In the reporting years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 32% and 36% of cases were resolved at a formal level, respectively.

The large majority of the formal requests and appeals that went forward were successful. Of those that were not successful, a small portion of these students received a modified outcome. Modified outcomes are not the resolution that was originally sought, but what might allow a student to recover academically. For example, a student may have requested an authorized withdrawal on medical grounds, but because the documentation only covers the final exam period, a retroactive deferred exam is granted instead. We also classify cases formally as "pending" for situations where a formal decision has not been determined as of the end of the reporting year. This applies to a small percentage of cases. (See Table 5)

Table 5: Formal Resolution	2006-2007	2005-2006
Granted	63%	58%
Modified	7%	13%
Denied	21%	22%
Decision pending	9%	7%

Other

The remaining 1% of the cases in both reporting years was closed as "other" (i.e. not included in the "formal" or "informal" statistics). These cases include instances where a student decided to retain a lawyer to assist with the formal process or a student, after submitting his/her appeal materials, chose to formally withdraw the appeal.

Meetings & Hearings

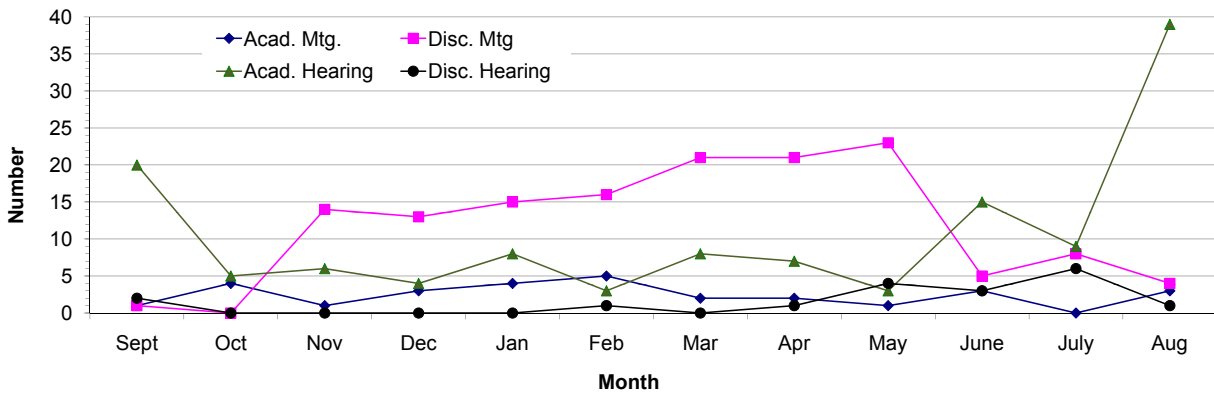
Our work with students includes preparation for and attendance at meetings and hearings for both academic and disciplinary matters. We distinguish between meetings (less formal in terms of process or procedure followed) and hearings (which involve a committee and formalized procedures). The advocates attended a total of 170 academic and disciplinary meetings in 2005-06, and 118 in 2006-07. Discipline meetings involve the investigative stages of a disciplinary process wherein the administrative authority meets with the student to discuss the allegation before making a decision.

The advocates attended a total of 145 academic and disciplinary hearings in 2005-06 and 156 hearings in 2006-07. Disciplinary hearings occur as a result of a student appealing a decision made at a lower level. Academic hearings

normally are used to hear requests/appeals of program policies or requirements. Figures 2 and 3 display the monthly trends of our meetings and hearings in both reporting years, separated according to “discipline” and “academic”

type. An interesting overall trend between both years is that the number of meetings decreased, but the number of hearings increased, from 2005-06 to 2006-07.

Figure 2: Monthly Trends: 2005-2006 - Meetings and Hearings



In 2005-2006, academic hearings were more frequent in September, June and August, as most faculty committees convene at these times to hear requests or appeals on decisions, such as academic suspensions or withdrawals, that affect a student’s continuation in the program for Regular Session.

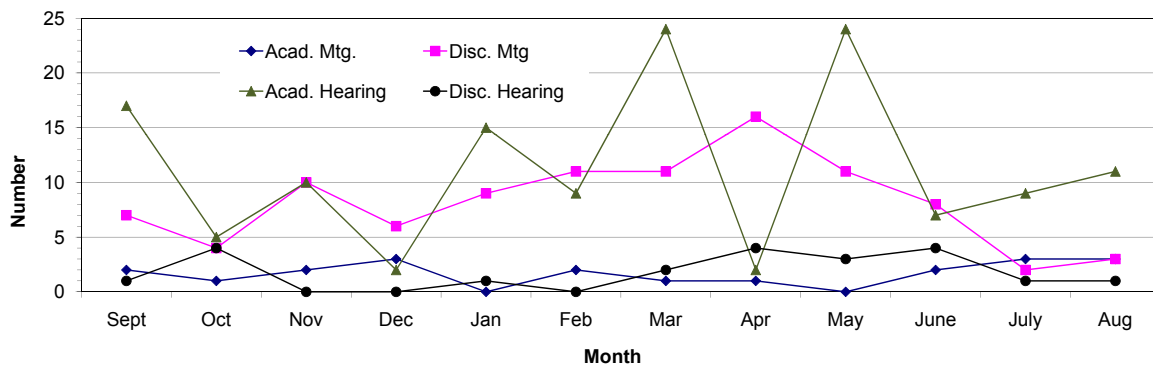
Occurring much more infrequently, academic meetings involve informal discussions between a student and their professor or thesis advisor regarding a course or progression in a program.

The frequency of disciplinary meetings, typically involving an administrator and a student to discuss an allegation,

rise and fall with the patterns of the academic year. These “investigative” meetings tended to be frequent in November and March, the timing of which coincides with the completion of mid-term tests or term work assignments. These meetings also tended to be high in April and May which follows the completion of final exams and final papers being graded.

Disciplinary hearings are less regular and are generally low throughout the year. However, in 2005-2006, there were 13 discipline hearings between May, June, and July which reflects the high number of students who appealed disciplinary decisions. The majority of these were appeals of academic dishonesty decisions.

Figure 3: Monthly Trends: 2006-2007 - Meetings and Hearings



In 2006-2007, the majority of hearings that took place were academic and tended to peak in September, March, and May. There were more faculties scheduling academic hearings in September (compared to August) to hear appeals and requests pertaining to continuation in Regular Session. It is noted that in March, there were a large number of hearings. In reviewing the cases for that month, this was due to an unusual circumstance in which one Faculty held two faculty committee meetings in one month.

The number of disciplinary meetings generally tended to peak at the same times as the 2005-06 reporting year (November, February/March, and April), consistent with mid term and end of term periods.

The overall number of disciplinary hearings in 2006-07 was comparable to 2005-06, the main difference being that they were scheduled more consistently throughout the year in 2006-07 with no specific “peak” month.

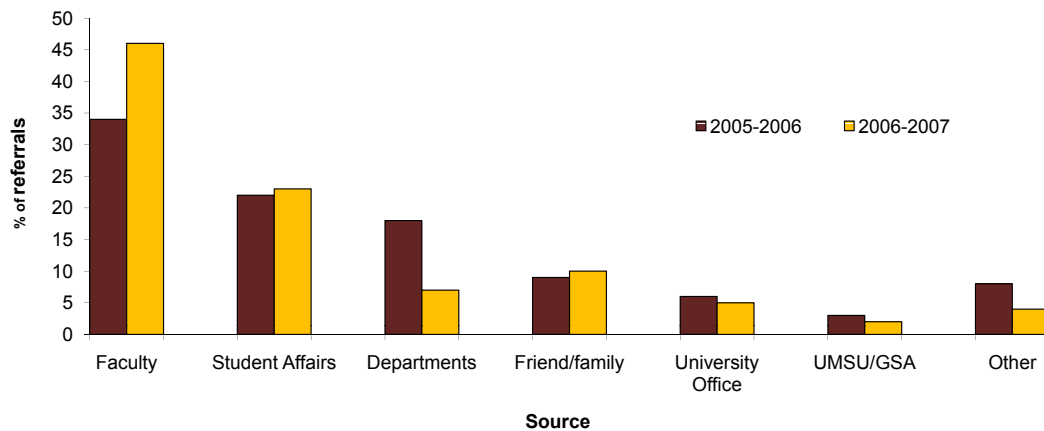
Referrals

In both reporting years, approximately 70% of our student contacts came from referrals.

The main referral source is Faculties (either advisors or administrators), followed by Student Affairs offices, aca-

demical departments, friends and family, and other university offices. A small percentage of students identified online sources, print materials, and workshops/orientations as referral agents. Please see Table 6 for details.

Table 6: Referrals 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 - Referral Sources



Educational Initiatives

Student Advocacy staff are committed to providing high quality and relevant educational programming to the university community on various topics. Across the two reporting years, Student Advocacy staff participated in 80 presentations, orientations and workshops, which can be categorized into four main themes:

Orientations and Workshops

Student Rights and Responsibilities.....49

- » Student orientations (30)
- » Faculty and staff (11)
- » General workshops (8)

Academic Integrity.....26

- » Academic integrity (3)
- » Plagiarism/Writing and citing (14)
- » Exam cheating (1)
- » Student orientations (1)
- » Faculty and staff (5)
- » General workshops (2)

Procedural Fairness & Advice for Faculty and Administrators.....4

Handling Incivility and Disruptive Behaviour.....1

Notable Accomplishments

Orientation video

Student Advocacy created orientation videos for the 2005 and 2006 U1 orientation. The first video, entitled *Get Positioned for Success (GPS)* was produced by the Student

Affairs Communication Specialist Jason Herzog. Student Advocacy staff, and most notably Heather Morris, prepared the script and acted in the production. University academic staff and administrators were recruited to “star” in the video and relay important messages to students pertaining to their rights and responsibilities.

In 2006, Cory Falvo was hired to create a new look for the production – a video for students created by students. The video is entitled *Learning to Swim: Riding the waves to academic success*. The video was later added to our website and to the Virtual Learning Commons. Students have the choice to watch the video in its entirety or to select which chapter to access.

Academic Integrity Weeks 9 and 10

Integrity 9

The theme for *Academic Integrity Week – Integrity 9* was appropriate writing and citing. A workshop with that title was offered to graduate students with a focus on the challenges of writing a graduate thesis. Miriam Unruh, Coordinator of LAC, and Brandy Usick co-presented the sessions which took place at the Fort Garry and Bannatyne campuses and were very well attended. Another workshop “Creating a Culture of Academic Integrity” was presented for CHET participants. Staff promoted Integrity 9 through articles published in the Manitoban, the Gradzette, and Residence newsletter.

Integrity 10

Last year marked the 10th annual hosting of Student Advocacy's Academic Integrity Week. The occasion was marked by a celebratory booth in University Centre. Event highlights included a workshop for international students on "Acting with Integrity: Know Your University's Expectations" which was facilitated by Heather Morris and Zuzana Dankova. Brandy Usick and Miriam Unruh (LAC) co-presented "Writing and Citing: Challenges of Writing a Graduate Thesis" offered at the Fort Garry and Bannatyne campuses. Zuzana submitted an article to the Residence newsletter. Heather compiled the history of Academic Integrity week. Brian Barth created specialized appointment cards and created the Integrity 10 web pages. Brian also made a short presentation to UMSU council in which he promoted Integrity 10 and highlighted the VLC.

Student Advocacy Website

Brian Barth worked on revamping the web site which is now more user-friendly. In addition to the reorganization of the content, the Advocates created material specifically outlining how to file grade appeals and make requests for authorized withdrawals (which are our most common appeals/requests). A Frequently Asked Questions section was also added and a section was created to include resources specifically for staff.

Virtual Learning Commons – Graduate Community

In partnership with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Student Advocacy applied and subsequently received a two year grant from the Strategic Program Development Fund to create online resources and educational programming for graduate students. A number of University units, led by Peter Tittenberger of Learning Technology Centre (LTC), began collaboration on the Virtual Learning Commons, a social networking site and centralized repository for student resources and services. LTC developed the Virtual Learning Commons and the supports for graduate students became one of the communities added to this site. Amit Chhabra, a PhD student in the Department of Computer Science, was hired to assist in the development of the graduate community. He was also responsible for creating and adapting content that would be appropriate for the site. Nancy Callaghan, a former advocate was later hired to create content that was informed by her work with graduate students. In the summer of 2007 a focus group with graduate students was held to receive constructive feedback on the site and the content. Their feedback was summarized and provided to the VLC Management Committee. Incorporating those suggestions pertaining to the graduate community is the focus of our work for the current term.

Research and Scholarly Activities

- » Heather Morris and Brandy Usick were guest lecturers for Lynn Smith's online course *The Role of Students and Student Needs* offered through CHERD.
- » Brandy Usick was interviewed by Alex Gillis who published an article entitled "Cheating Themselves" in the April 2007 edition of *University Affairs*.

Conference presentations

- » Usick, B. L. (2007, June). *Evolving as a scholar: How do graduate students learn about avoiding plagiarism?* Presented at the Society for Teaching and Learning Conference, Edmonton, AB.
- » Usick, B. L. (2007, March). *Cultivating an understanding of plagiarism within graduate education*. Presented at the Canadian Student Judicial Affairs Conference, Windsor, ON.
- » Usick, B. L. & Morris, H. (2006, February). *Academic integrity week: A Canadian institution's 9-year experience*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Association on Student Judicial Affairs, Clearwater Beach, FL.

Publications and internal presentations

- » Barth, B. (2007, February) *Image and text: Tools of visual communication for an integrated teaching approach*. Presented as part of the UTS Workshop Series.
- » Barth, B. (2007, Spring). New tools, new media: Three strategies for the "hyperfied" classroom. *UTS newsletter*, 15(1), 4-5.
- » Morris, H. (2007, Spring). Peers: Students helping students – A collaboration spanning 20 years. *Communiqué*, 7(18), 18.
- » Smith, L. M. & Usick, B. L. (2006, April) *Training appeals committees*. Presentation to staff at Assiniboine Community College, Brandon, MB
- » Usick, B. L. (2006, Fall). Student complaints and poor performance: Issues in experiential learning courses. *UTS newsletter*, 15(1), 10-11.
- » Morris, H. (2005). Final exams and technology: Policy and practice. *UTS Newsletter*, 14(1), 6.

Staff

Student Affairs underwent a review and subsequent restructuring. The most direct impact of this event to the office was the appointment of Dr. Lynn Smith, Director of Student Advocacy and Resource Services, to the position of Executive Director, Student Services. Brandy Usick (former Student Advocate) was hired as Director in an interim capacity in June 2005 and was then officially appointed in

December 2005. In January 2006, Brian Barth was hired as a Student Advocate. Brian was formerly an Accessibility Advisor in Disability Services and graduated with his M.A. in Anthropology. Also in 2006-2007 Student Advocacy reluctantly said good bye to two employees: Zuzana Dankova, Student Advocate, left in November 2006 to take the position of International Student Advisor in the Faculty of Science and Paul Taylor, Junior Student Advocate, graduated from the Faculty of Law in May 2007 and moved to Ottawa for an articling position. In May 2007 we welcomed Ali Wood, Junior Student Advocate, who is completing her Bachelor of Arts.

Committee Work

Student Advocacy staff are committed to playing active roles on Student Services, Student Affairs and University committees. Staff participation is summarized below.

Brandy Usick was involved with: Council of Student Affairs (COSA), Faculty of Graduate Studies Guidelines and Policy Committee, Student Advocacy and Resource Services Coordinators, Student Leadership Task Force and Virtual Learning Commons Management Committee, Student Affairs Orientation Committee and Administrative Council. Heather Morris was a member of the Promotions and Tenure Committee and Academic Advising Toolkit and Training Project Advisory Committee (ATTPAC). Brian Barth and Heather Morris participated in the ACCESS student selection

Staff were also involved with various Search Committees over the two reporting years which included: Director, Student Advocacy and Resource Services (Heather), Student Advocate (Brandy – Chair, Heather), SCCC Director Reappointment Committee (Brandy) Junior Peer Advocate (Brandy – Chair, Brian and Angel)

Staff Outreach

Brandy joined the Alumni Association Board of Directors in September 2006. Brian is a member of the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board and was recruited as a board member for Winnipeg Citizen's Advocacy. Paul presented on the use of language for the Alternative Dispute Resolution Section of the Manitoba Bar Association and was the Deputy Returning officer for the Engineering Tuition increase referendum. Zuzana Dankova and Angel Therrien were United Way Rainbow Auction Campaign representatives.

Professional Development

Student Advocacy staff are committed to participating in educational opportunities that lead to the development of enhancement of skills or provide chance for reflection of our services. The following are highlights of the past two years:

- » Brandy attended *Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* Conference held at the University Alberta (June 2007).
- » Brandy and Heather attended *Association of Student Judicial Affairs* conference held in Clearwater, Florida (February 2006).
- » Brandy attended the University of Management Course (UMC) held in Banff, AB (May 2007).
- » Heather and Brian attended CACUSS (June 2007) held at the University of Saskatchewan.
- » Staff from Student Advocacy and Disability Services attended the inaugural SA&RS Retreat held at the St. Norbert Arts Centre (May 2007)
- » Brandy attended the University of Management Course (UMC) held in Banff, AB (May 2007).
- » Angel participated in the Support Staff Endowment Fund Exchange Trip, hosted this year by the University of Victoria (April 2007).
- » Brandy and Heather attended the *Canadian Student Judicial Affairs* conference hosted by the University of Windsor (March 2007).
- » Brian audited Karen Busby's Administrative Law class (Winter 2007)
- » Brandy attended CACUSS hosted by McMaster University (June 2006).
- » Brandy attended *Canadian Student Judicial Affairs* conference hosted by the University of Alberta (March 2006).

Staff also attended sessions offered by various units on campus including Student Affairs, University Teaching Services, Learning Development Services, and Information Services & Technology. Staff have also been participated in the American Sign Language course offered by Disability Services.

Advocacy Training

David Wesst (2005-2006) and Rimma Pilat (2006-2007) were our Advocacy Placement Peers. Zuzana Dankova was the Placement Coordinator and co-trainer, along with Angel Therrien.

Student Advocacy also provides training and support to students who hold student governance positions that include an advocacy component in their portfolio. During the reporting periods Brandy Usick met with UMSU VP Advocacy, GSA Vice President Advocacy and Engineering Vice President.

Peers: Students Helping Students

During the reporting years, the Peer program was once

again very successful in providing training to approximately 30 volunteers each year. These volunteers also were able to work in the Peer Office to help students. The volunteers also participated in various outreach activities throughout the years. On an administrative level, a sub-committee was formed in 2005 to undertake a review of the program's Constitutional Framework, which was last revised in 2001.

Heather Morris continued in her role as Chair of the Steering Committee and administrator of the Peer program. She also participated on the sub-committee for the constitutional revision. The Volunteer Coordinators were: Joan Roberts (September 2005-April 2006), Jenny Molendyk (May 2006-August 2006) and Angela Kennedy (September 2006-August 2007).

Future Plans

In keeping with our educational mandate, particularly with regard to non-academic discipline matters, we are working at preparing written and website materials on the topic of non-academic discipline matters. Corresponding materials will be created that will give advice to students on how to be safe on campus and how to report concerns if they feel threatened or unsafe. These materials will complement the existing material our office has on academic discipline (i.e., academic dishonesty). As there are several policies currently in place to address non-academic misconduct, materials regarding the process and procedures for responding to inappropriate behaviour, and expectations for appropriate behaviour will be helpful for both students and staff. Existing Policies include Inappropriate and Disruptive Student Behaviour, Violent and Threatening Behaviour, Appropriate Use of Computers, Respectful Work and Learning Policy, and the Student Discipline By-Law. The goal in having a large number of policies cited in this area is to show that the University is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for all members of the campus community. However, given the number of policies in place, it is important to develop clear procedures for responding to non-academic discipline matters.

Our office is working jointly with Equity Services and the Ombudsman to ensure that our materials are consistent with policies and procedures set out by their respective offices. In addition, given the new issues that arise when it comes to non-academic misconduct and the increased use of technology (i.e., email, web sites, blogs, etc.), our office is working on updating workshops for students to educate them about applying principles of appropriate behaviour to the use of technology. This will also be complemented by workshops and articles for faculty and staff for responding to inappropriate behaviour that may occur in electronic forms.

Recommendations

Student Advocacy recommends that work on the Student Discipline By-Law be expedited. The By-law has been under review for the past number of years and drafts have been circulated to some members of the University community for feedback. Consequently, some of the proposed changes have already led to some modifications in practices. For example, the administrator of the Faculty offering the course in question may consult with the student's home Faculty to discuss procedures, specifically whether a joint meeting with the student would be appropriate.

Acknowledgements

During the past two years, many new and innovative projects were initiated and could not have been possible without the support and collaboration of our partners. One of these projects was the development of the Virtual Learning Commons, an on-line community and resource for U of M students to stay connected to each other and make use of the variety of on-line academic resources. The Learning Technology Centre developed the Virtual Learning Commons with content created by Student Advocacy, Learning Assistance Centre, the Libraries and IST.

We would also like to acknowledge the Faculty of Science for their development of comprehensive web material and information on the topic of Academic Integrity. This is a resource that can be utilized by faculty and staff in terms of how to respond to instances of academic dishonesty. As well, there is information for students to help them understand what constitutes cheating, how to avoid it, and what the consequence could be for cheating. The faculty also instituted faculty-wide "honesty declarations" to be signed by all students upon the submission of term work.

Glossary of Terms

Contacts - students or staff who contact the Student Advocacy office with questions or to arrange an appointment with a student advocate. These contacts can be in-person, email, or phone.

Cases - a case file is opened for a student to follow a particular issue/request/appeal.

Group Case - a group of students contact the office with the same issue.

Issue - a matter in which a student is seeking assistance (e.g. concern, complaint, appeal, etc). Issues cases are investigated as an overall issue affecting a large number of students.

Category - the way in which issues are classified or grouped: academic, discipline, administrative, admissions, or equity.



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