The Ombuds Office

The Ombuds Office is a confidential, neutral, informal and independent resource……

- To assist members of the RIT community in the process of resolving and managing any RIT-related conflict, concern, or issue.

- To identify recurring problems or issues and communicate that information to appropriate personnel who can resolve them.
The Ombuds Office

~ Examples of Student Concerns ~

- Harassment and discrimination
- Issues of equity and fairness: grades, student conduct, decisions made by administrators, faculty, staff
- Questions and concerns related to RIT policies and procedures
- Interpersonal conflicts
Ombuds Offices at RIT
~ History and Evolution~

Evolution of the Office:
- Office of the Student Ombudsperson - established as a pilot program - 1989
- Student Problem Resolution Office - name change - 2003
- The RIT Ombuds Office - function and title change 2006

RIT Student Ombudspersons:
- Dr. Barry Culhane - 1989 - 1998
- Dr. Laura Tubbs - 1998 - 2003
- Ms. Lee Twyman - 2003 - present
The Ombuds Office
2006 - 2007
New and Expanded Resource

• The Ombuds Office - a major change in service
• Serving “anyone in the RIT Community” - students, staff, faculty, administrators
• Same goals - to help manage and resolve RIT-related conflicts, disputes, concerns
• Same major types of concerns: fairness, equity, harassment and discrimination, policy and procedures, interpersonal and/or professional conflicts, decisions affecting groups within the RIT Community
• Expanded scope and concerns brought to the ombuds office
• A comment about our contacts and role with parents
The Ombuds Office

~ Advisor Connection ~

- Referrals by you or faculty members
- Questions and concerns related to RIT policies and procedures
- For issues that cross college boundaries
- Other?
- Student awareness of the Ombuds Office
- Your connection - to consult with the office or as a member of the RIT Community
Lee Twyman:

Questions
Optional Slides
The Ombuds Office

~Transition Year~

• Open the Ombuds Office to the entire RIT community
• Inform community members of the Ombuds Office - role, services, access information
• Modify the office practices to accommodate expanded role
• Ombuds Advisory Committee - expand membership
• Revise policy governing the ombuds office
• Develop charter for office
• Develop position description for Ombuds
• Produce all new materials for the Office: brochures, website, signage, etc.
• Possible space modification to allow for more privacy and a neutral meeting space for those who come to the office
• National search for ombudsperson
Ombuds Office and HR:

- In the “people part” of RIT
- Prevention and solving problems for RIT

However, by definition, HR and Ombuds cannot do each other’s jobs.

The ombuds and HR roles and responsibilities are radically different
## Ombuds Office - Human Resources
### Contrasting Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th>Ombuds Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function: Help run RIT</td>
<td>Function: “Safety net” for problems within RIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part of the management structure</td>
<td>Independent, neutral and informal, operates outside of formal channels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creates and maintains policies and procedures</td>
<td>Identifies problematic or observed inconsistencies in policies/procedures and/or recurring problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Represents and protects the interests of RIT</td>
<td>Neutral and impartial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cannot ensure confidentiality</td>
<td>Confidential communications (except in cases of potential harm - self/others)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Ombuds Office</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Office of notice” - as are all managers/supervisors</td>
<td>Not an “office of notice”, but can help explore and refer to those resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can conduct formal investigations to inform management decisions</td>
<td>Does not conduct formal investigations...does informal information gathering, as needed, with consent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAC Membership</td>
<td>Current Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Student Members</td>
<td>OPEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Exempt Staff Member</td>
<td>OPEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Non-Exempt Staff Member</td>
<td>Sandra Whitmore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OAC Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tenured Faculty Member</td>
<td>OPEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Non-Tenured Faculty Member</td>
<td>William Leonard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Staff Administrator</td>
<td>Lisa Cauda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Linda Tolan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ad hoc members (as needed)</td>
<td>OPEN/TBA</td>
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