



**THE OFFICE OF
THE OMBUDS
ANNUAL REPORT
2013-2014**

Hessian, Gregory
Fanshawe College 2013-2014

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

To Promote a College community environment where all students may address and resolve concerns or issues in a manner that is consistent with the Office of the Ombuds' mandate of impartiality, independence, and confidentiality.



CONTENTS

Executive Summary: 2

Past Recommendations – Work in Progress: 4

2009/10: 4

2011/12: 4

2012/13: 4

Focus on Students: 6

Acknowledgement 9

Appendix I - Data: 10

Fanshawe College Rights and Responsibilities Statement: 14



Executive Summary:

Please accept this 2013/14 Ombuds annual report. This report highlights the introduction of Fanshawe's new strategic framework, and the Office of the Ombuds response to this new direction. In the spring of 2013, Fanshawe announced its new strategic framework that encompasses a greater focus on increasing student enrollments (domestically and internationally) in post-secondary diplomas, degrees, and graduate certificates. The new strategic framework includes a new catchphrase, vision and mission statements, and institutional goals. In support of this fresh direction, Fanshawe is also highlighting its beliefs in the form of an essential values statement. Fanshawe's faculty, staff, and administrators now have a greater sense of the organizational goals by having regard for and demonstrating the following core values in their daily activities:

Focus on students

Involve our community

Utilize resources wisely

Embrace change

Engage each other

2

Following the introduction of the new strategic framework, Fanshawe celebrated the successes and retirement of its well-recognized and long serving President, Dr. Howard Rundle. During the tenure of Dr. Rundle, Fanshawe had seen a period of unprecedented growth that included the establishment of the Office of the Ombuds. I wish to take the opportunity to thank Dr. Rundle for his support and commitment to this office. Following the announcement of Dr. Rundle's retirement, Peter Devlin was appointed Fanshawe's 5th President. The Office of the Ombuds welcomes Peter Devlin has appreciated working with him in ensuring fair dealings between the College and students.

This historical perspective is an important reference to the Office of the Ombuds, as it signifies a year of transition. This transition not only encompasses a significant change in leadership, it includes a change in Fanshawe's strategic framework towards a bold new vision and mission that provides clearer organizational goals and values. For the purposes of this report, the focuses on students value will be explored.

Executive Summary:

Transitional activities have also occurred within the Office of the Ombuds. During the 2013/14 academic year, I was fortunate to have obtained an opportunity to lead the School of Building Technology, as the Acting Academic Chair. As such, an interim Ombuds was hired to continue championing the resolution matters in a fair and collegial manner. At this time, I would like to recognize and sincerely thank Rose Valle, the Acting Ombuds for her contributions to Fanshawe, while I stepped away from the operations of the office during this academic year.

This year's annual report is intended to create greater meaning to Fanshawe's value of "focus on students". In support of Fanshawe's strategic framework, the Office of the Ombuds intends to highlight the "focus on students" value and will support the College in bringing it alive by promoting what is envisioned by "focused on students".

Greg Hessian, May 2015



Past Recommendations – Work in Progress:

2009/10:

To provide all college community members electronically accessible Course Information Sheets (CIS) for college course offerings and Program Information Sheets (PIS) for program offerings. The CIS must remain current, reflect college standards, and comply with college policy.

Update:

Fanshawe continues to support this recommendation. However, it has been queued amongst IT project priorities. Work also continues with internal stakeholders to determine the best solution for the College's business needs.

2011/12:

To develop and promote an on-line fairness course, which includes educational components that will be available to all College community members, free of charge.

Update:

A substantive amount of work has been completed by the fairness working group. Committee members, representing interested parties, presented an extensively researched paper on the subject and brought forward a comprehensive framework. The information may form the basis of a workshop. This information was provided to the Organizational Learning and Development area, that is currently developing a workshop.

4

2012/13:

That each school within the College community review their departmental procedures and course information sheets to ensure compliance and alignment with existing College policies. Where inconsistencies with College policies exist, that these areas be identified and brought forward to College policy makers for consideration and review.

Update:

Following the presentation of this recommendation, there was extensive discussion and wide acceptance to bring departmental practices in line with college approved policy. It is understood many academic areas have taken the opportunity to review their practices to ensure compliance with college policy. It may now be appropriate to finalize these reviews to ensure no further contradictions occur between departmental policy and practice, and vice versa, in an effort to resolve any such disconnects.

Past Recommendations – Work in Progress:

That the following form be reviewed by relevant departments with an eye to improving the content and language to ensure clarity and student acknowledgement - the academic offence form.

Update:

This recommendation remains outstanding and has been queued amongst the current academic priorities.

That where a program requires a student to attend any form of a work placement that the following be considered: A) mandatory workshop for students be delivered prior to the student attending placement; B) Student be advised that any special needs or accommodation requests need to be reviewed by the appropriate parties to ensure the suitability and if required work placement accommodations or modification assistance [be provided].

Update:

Effective November 2014, the new definition of worker under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) expands coverage of the OHSA to unpaid interns, certain other learners and trainees participating in a work placement in Ontario. Specifically, the new definition of worker includes unpaid learners participating in a program approved by a post-secondary institution. In discussion with the Occupational Health and Safety department, a review is currently underway to ensure the college meets its legislative obligations. This includes the worker's "right to participate", "right to know" and "right to refuse work" as outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Focus on Students:

In 2012, Fanshawe created a new strategic framework that includes a vision statement of Unlocking Potential; a mission statement of “we provide pathways to success, a quality learning experience, and a global outlook to meet the needs of students and employers”; along with new strategic goals. The College states:

“In June 2013, Fanshawe College launched a new Strategic Framework which included the College’s new Vision, Mission, and Values. Our Vision is a compelling picture of our business in the future. Our Mission lays out an inspirational path towards achievement of our Vision, improving the focus and alignment of our decisions and planning. Our Values – those we currently hold and those we hope to grow – guide our behaviours along that path. This Strategic Framework keeps Fanshawe contemporary and helps to shape our future success.”

It is important to emphasize that the framework includes the following values:

Focus on students Involve our community
Utilize resources wisely Embrace change
Engage each other

6

The values in motion media campaign ensued, completing the introduction of the strategic framework. By way of this transformational campaign, all those at the College who deal with student related matters, (whether it be direct or indirect), now have been entrusted with the responsibility to act within the context of these values.

In essence, the quality of education at Fanshawe is dependent on these values, and the College’s ability to provide its student body an exceptional academic experience in their chosen field of study may only be enhanced with the introduction of these values. Along with these values, the perception of fairness will be enhanced as Fanshawe demonstrates these values.

The Office of the Ombuds is appreciative of the College expressing all five principles. However, for the purposes of this report, “focus on students” value will be discussed. Upon reflection of the specific cases seen during the 2013/14 academic year, there may be an opportunity for College officials to positively impact its decision-making by placing more emphasis on the value related to student focus. In doing so, the College may take an opportunity to reinforce fairness within the context of student focused.

When the Strategic framework was launched in June of 2013, the College stated: “Our Values – those we currently hold and those we hope to grow – guide our behaviours along that path... in shaping the future”. The launch of the framework is very encouraging from a fairness point of view; however, an inherent challenge remains: What behaviours does the college expect from its staff, faculty and administrators, in the context of student focused?

Focus on Students:

A student typically visits the office of the Ombuds because of a belief they have been unfairly treated. In the 2013/14 academic year, 305 students raised concerns regarding fairness. Upon reflection, when students describe their interactions with a decision makers, two patterns of behavior become apparent with respect to the decision maker. On one hand, behaviours associated with an authoritarian approach emerges. On the other hand, behaviours associated with a lenient or more compassionate approach emerges with respect to the student interactions.

Interestingly, when discussing the situation with the two types of decision makers, a dichotomy seems to exist between two distinct approaches of authoritarian and compassion/leniency. However, they will both describe themselves as “student focused”. This being said, based observations gained from visitors to the office, the authoritarian approach seems to cause students the most difficulty and in reality seems to cause the biggest burden on the institution in terms to student appeals, and arguably takes the longest time to resolve. In cases where a compassion/lenient approach is taken when dealing with students, a resolution is achieved quickly, and likely, with no involvement of any additional staff, faculty or administrators.

These observations are not made with respect to which one of the decision maker’s approach is preferred over the other. However, the intent is to highlight an opportunity for the college to clarify what is meant by “student focused”. If the college chooses to define this value in more concrete terms, people within the college may be able to align and model their actions and behaviours behind this value, in a more consistent manner. If one accepts that a correlation exists between consistency and fairness, one may easily conclude the perception of fairness will be enhanced by defining this value and what is meant by it.

Acknowledgement:

It is a great pleasure serving the Fanshawe community in the role of Ombuds. I enjoy working with many student leaders, the Fanshawe Student Union (FSU) staff members, the office's advisory committee and college officials at all levels of the organization. Given the number of folks that interact with the office, it is not practical to thank all the individuals who have promoted and supported the office, and most importantly helped resolve conflict situations. I particularly appreciate the helpful hints and collaboration that I have personally received when working to resolve student difficulties or disputes.

The Office of the Ombuds was established in 1993, and since this time there has been a continuous improvement process that has emerged, making it more effective and efficient. Since the office's inception, folks from information technology, facilities and maintenance, academic schools, and all the administrative and support staff have contributed to its continuous improvement. For this reason, I appreciate each college community member and what they have to offer in making the college as a whole a better place. However, I wish acknowledge two of Fanshawe's community members in particular, by expressing my sincere appreciation to both John Young, Operations Manager (FSU) and Cathie Auger, Vice President of Student Services for their support of the office, in pursuing fairness for all. Thank you.

8



Appendix I - Data:

Diagram #1:

Provides the total number of visitors for each of the past 5 years. This captures data related to whether the student's fairness issue falls within the Ombuds mandate. An example of where a fairness issue would not fall within the Office's mandate would be a student who is denied their transcript due to owing fees.

	Inside Mandate		Outside Mandate	TOTAL
	Resolution without Direct Intervention*	Resolution with Direct Intervention		
2009/10	264	26	9	299
2010/11	281	25	6	312
2011/12	269	29	9	307
2012/13	273	43	7	323
2013/14	267	33	5	305

*Student self-advocacy, within the Ombuds coaching/mentoring model

9

Diagram #2: Fairness Concerns by Category

Provides a breakdown of the five fairness categories that the Ombuds uses to classify complaints.

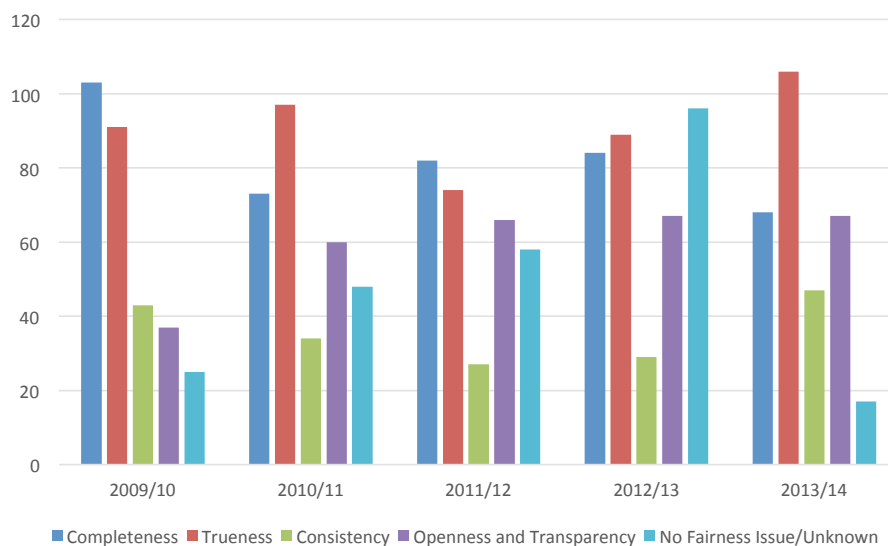
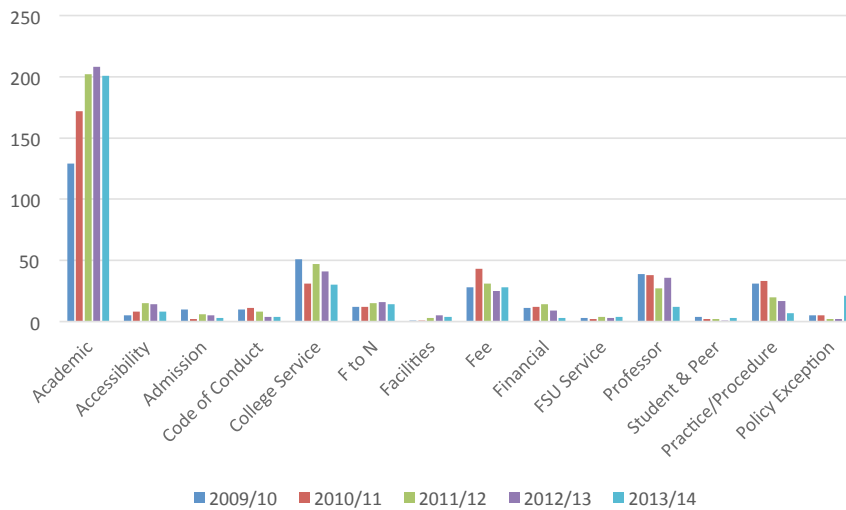


Diagram #3: Visitor Nature of Difficulty or Dispute

Provides the nature of the dispute or difficulty and what is the area of concern. It is interestingly to note that academic issues account for approximately 2/3rds of the student complaints which seems to be on the rise.



10

Diagram #4: Visitor by Area of Study

Outlines the school that the student is attending, and not necessarily the area responsible for the concern. It is important to note that the difficulty or dispute may be with a service or other department within the College. This chart simply outlines the school where the student is registered.

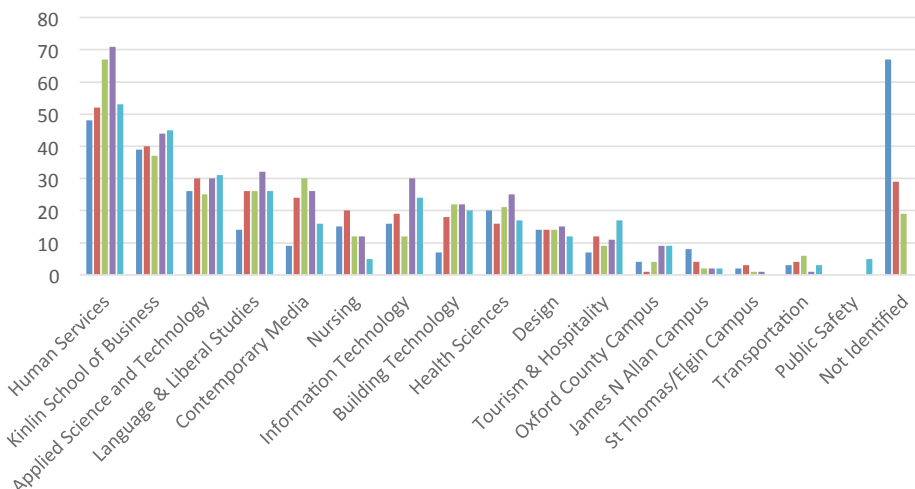
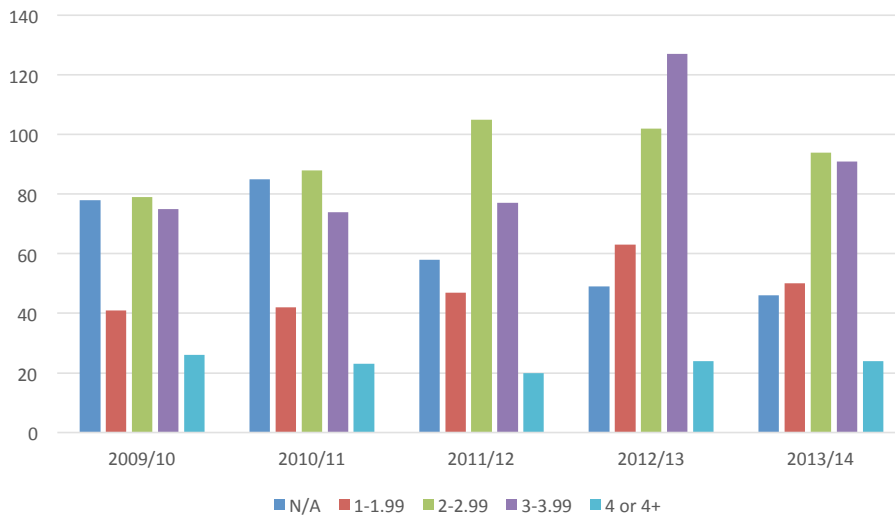


Diagram #5: Visitor by GPA Range

Provides a breakdown of the GPA of the student. Interestingly, the majority of visitors hold a GPA higher than a 2.0. The “not applicable or CE or 1st Semester” category was mainly derived from the non-student or anonymous type of visitor or the visitor was a 1st semester student where a GPA was not yet calculated



11

Diagram #6: Visitor by Area by Gender

The chart below categorizes the visitor by gender. There are no significant changes in the ratio of female of male visitors for this reporting period.

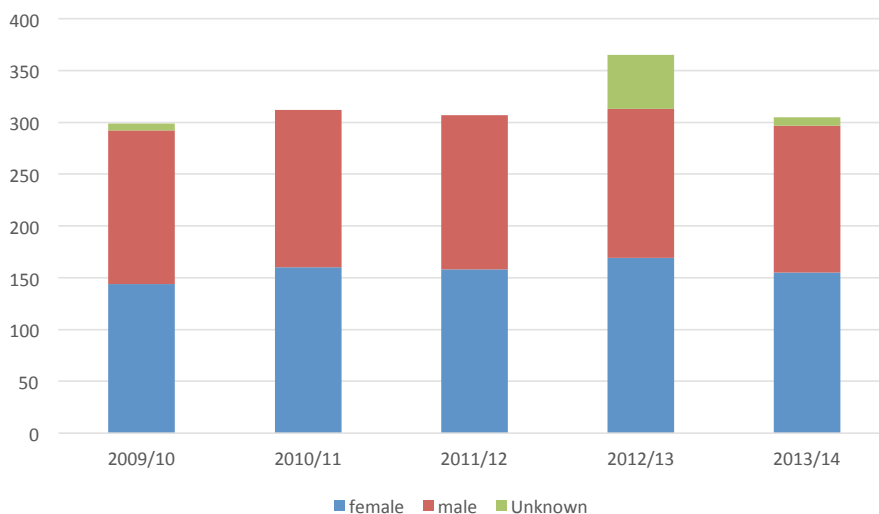
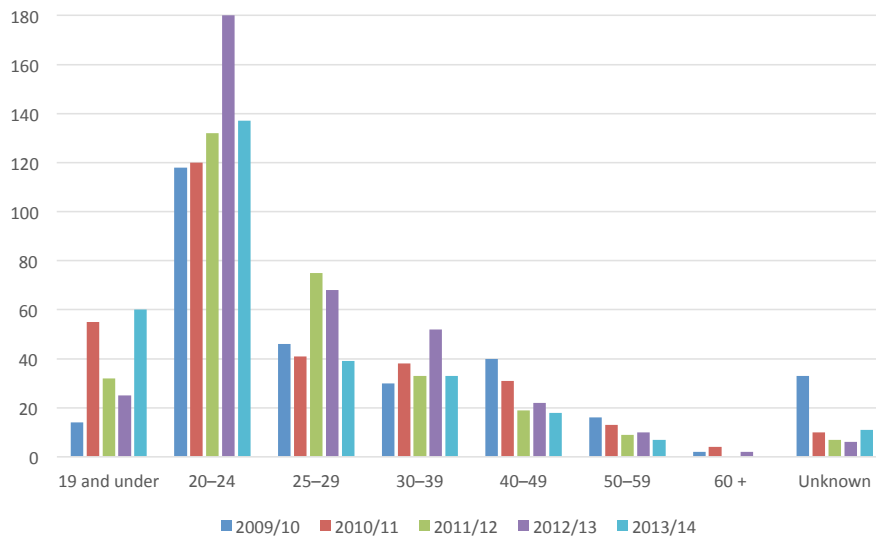


Diagram #7: Visitor by Age Range

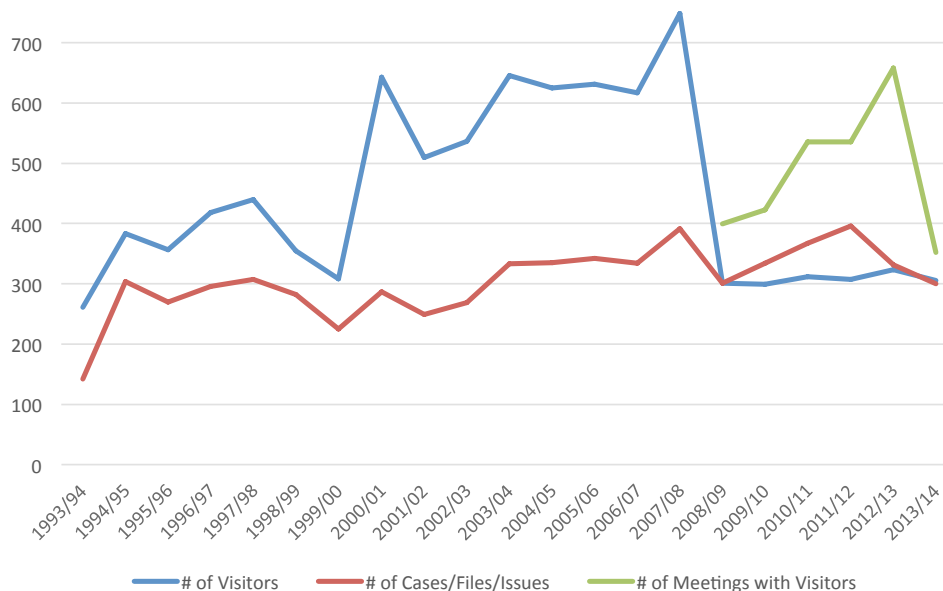
Diagram #7 shows the age distribution of students at the time of their visit, during this period of time. Not surprisingly, the largest category includes students who are between the ages of 20 to 24 years of age.



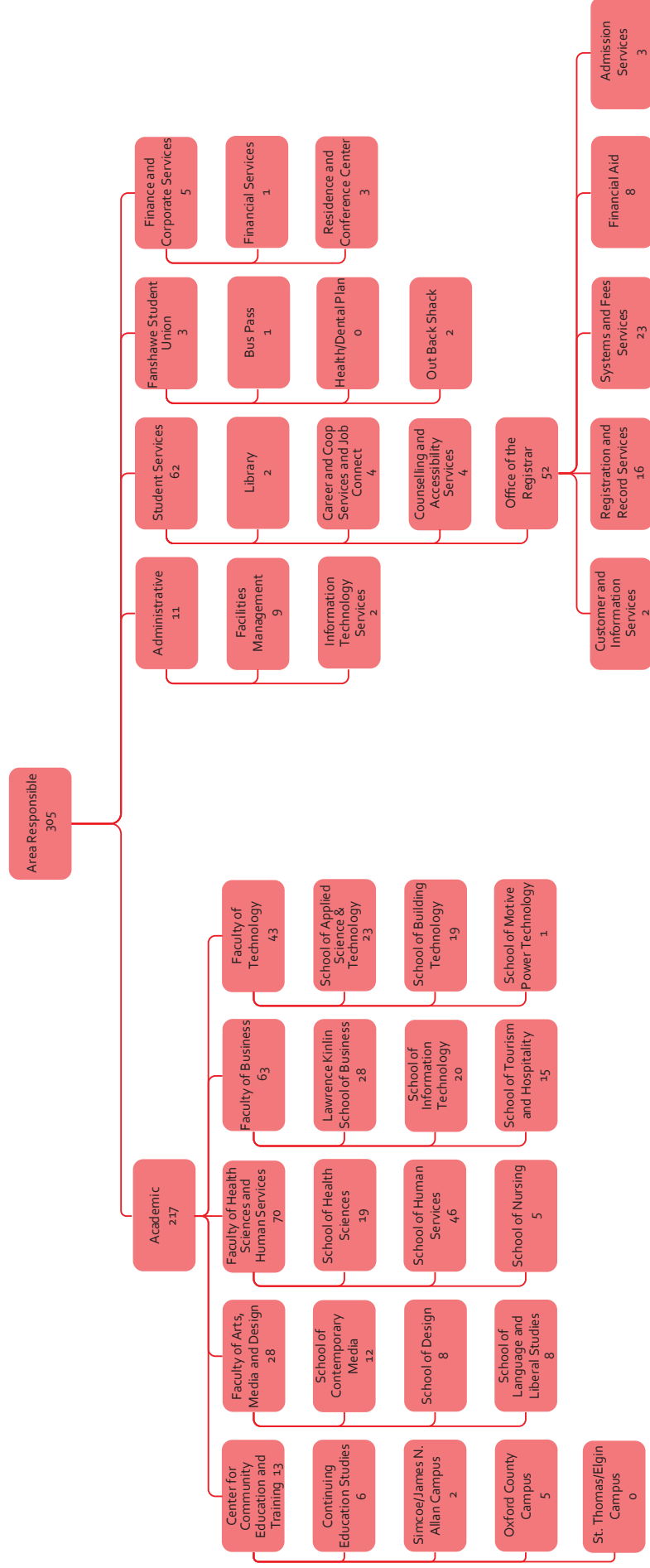
12

Diagram #8: Historical Charting of Visits, Issues and Meetings

Diagram #8 provides an interesting historical perspective of the level of Office activities since the creation of the Office in 1993.



Area Responsible for the Difficulty of Dispute



Please note: This chart indicates the area responsible for the visitor's primary concern or dispute. This information does not reflect the Student's area of study. 7 of the 307 visitors raised issues not within the scope of the Office of the Ombuds Mandate. Thus leaving a total of 300 visitor's difficulties or disputes.

Statement of Rights and Responsibilities

The College and FSU value the following principles of trust, confidentiality, respect, fairness, equality, dignity, diversity, security and safety in order to offer the highest quality education, learning experience and student life in this academic community.

These principles encompass all student activities under the banner of Fanshawe College and/or FSU, on and off College campuses. All participants entering into this moral and social contract will commit to the following principles:

STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- a safe, secure and accessible College environment, suitable and reasonable for learning, study and wellness
- a positive environment conducive to learning characterized by equality and mutual respect that remains free from personal bias, and unlawful harassment and discrimination
- timely, objective, fair and reasonable academic evaluation methods that are reflective of academic, occupational and industry standards and competencies
- timely notification of all academic and administrative decisions that affect their College community life (in writing and including supporting rationale where required by College policy)
- timely and appropriate services and supports to foster a positive and meaningful educational experience
- seek clarification of, or recourse on, all decisions under College policies that affect them without fear of reprisal
- the protection of privacy and confidentiality of personal information, subject to limits in accordance with the law

STUDENTS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO:


- abide by all applicable federal, provincial and municipal law
- treat members of the College community with respect
- follow all reasonable direction provided by the College and/or FSU
- be engaged in the pursuit of learning within an ordered academic environment
- adhere to the Student Code of Conduct and other relevant College/FSU practices, policies and procedures
 - be honest and truthful and not make any false, misleading or inflammatory statements or allegations
 - report any wrong doing or unlawful activities to the College and/or FSU officials
 - ensure all College and/or FSU visitor(s) are informed of the expectations outlined in the Code of Conduct
 - adhere to the “fair information principles” and abide by College policies respecting the privacy of others and the confidentiality of personal information

14

COLLEGE AND FSU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO:

- abide by all applicable federal, provincial and municipal law
- act in the best interest of students following the principles of 1) act in good faith, 2) be reasonable, 3) adhere to set standards and 4) place appropriate weight on information gathered against set criteria
- provide an environment conducive to learning that is safe, secure and accessible; suitable and reasonable for learning, study and wellness
- provide students timely and relevant advice and guidance
- publish accessible and relevant information (e.g. program and course content and academic progression criteria)
- ensure no changes to practices, policies or procedures will apply retroactively to the detriment of the student
- adhere to the “fair information principles” and collect, use and disclose personal information in accordance with the law, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act
- protect the security of students while maintaining the physical facilities to government, educational and appropriate industry standards
- promote dispute resolution through the assistance of the Office of the Ombuds

The College and the FSU will meet annually to review and, if both parties agree, to renew the Statement. In signing this document, the Presidents are committing the College and the FSU to the principles set forth.

Signed and dated by:

Peter Devlin, President Fanshawe College
Date: 16 April 2014


Matthew Stewart, President Fanshawe Student Union
Date: 1/5/14

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

Greg Hessian, Ombudsperson

Fanshawe College (London Campus) - Rm T3016

Appointments: 519-452-4282

ombuds@fanshawec.ca

fanshawec.ca/ombuds





FANSHAWE

Unlocking Potential

Whether it's a student developing new **skills and knowledge** to prepare for a future career, an innovative faculty member preparing curriculum for **flexible learning** opportunities, or a staff member collaborating with colleagues on services and programming for the downtown **Centre for Digital and Performance Arts**, learning and working at Fanshawe is both rewarding and transformational.

Fanshawe's new vision, **Unlocking Potential**, gives us the guidance, purpose, and inspiration we need to adapt to an ever-changing world.

Be a part of the future of Fanshawe.

Learn more: fanshawec.ca/vision



OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

Fanshawe College (London Campus) - Rm T3016

Appointments: 519-452-4282 ombuds@fanshawec.ca fanshawec.ca/ombuds