



FANSHAWE
COLLEGE

THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS ANNUAL REPORT

2011 2012

MISSION

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




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Executive Summary

The annual report from the Office of the Ombuds (Office) serves as an important indicator that fairness practices are not only evident, but also prominent in all decisions made at the College. Upon completing the 2011/12 annual report, it is clear the College community is interested in ensuring fair decision-making regarding student-related matters. Many agree it is paramount to Fanshawe College's (College) ultimate success, regardless of how it is evaluated.

With the full support of the College community, the Office operates openly and freely within the context of its mandate. The Office is also encouraged to report its findings regarding student difficulties and disputes in an unrestrained fashion. Due to this unwavering support, visitors accept the Office as a safe place to surface their fairness challenges, including:

- consistency of decision-making,
- trueness to the application of policy,
- completeness of a practice or procedure, and
- openness and transparency.

This year's annual report represents the 19th report since the inception of the Office on October 1, 1993. I am looking forward to celebrating the Office's 20th Anniversary of promoting fairness concepts, approaches, and methodologies throughout the College community. Over the next few years, the Office plans to develop a relevant and meaningful course focusing on fairness, including the four principles noted above. This course needs to be available to all members of the College community with no cost to participants. The course will include valuable information for all College members regarding the very issues discussed in the Office's annual reports.

As the College Ombuds, I am pleased to present my fourth annual report to the Fanshawe College community. Previous annual reports have highlighted fairness outcomes and Office highpoints regarding its business activities and initiatives that support the Office's fairness mandate. This year's report continues along the path of highlighting the importance of fairness, and the perception of fair and transparent decision-making within the College community.

In the previous academic year, the College community saw the signing and implementation of the first Fanshawe College Rights and Responsibilities Statement. This document has certainly made a positive impact that encompasses a broad spectrum of benefits, from setting the tone in creating a positive learning environment to principle guidelines used in policymaking. As College members become more familiar with the statement, and the College culture continues to support and enhance the perception of fairness, there will be many more recognized benefits.

The Office continues to collect data using a case management and data capture system. The information gathered produces significant insight into how difficulties and disputes are being managed within the College community. It is the Office's hope that the information will eventually be used to determine how these types of concerns may be avoided in the first place. This information is also useful in identifying emerging trends, yet must not be seen as conclusive by itself. The data emerging is a useful indicator when identifying opportunities to increase the College community's fairness capability.

As reported in previous annual reports, Office visitors learn from a coaching approach to self-advocate by realizing the “teachable moments.” Teachable moments focus on fact based and objective points developed by the visitor. Visitors then present this additional information to decision makers in a meaningful way. Decision makers confirm this approach is beneficial to both the student and the College, as it tends to limit the subjective components of a complaint. By providing the criteria for objective decision-making, the College also improves the perception of fairness in its processes.

The coaching model provides an inherent method of articulating concerns in a respectful, meaningful, and straightforward manner. This remains a high priority for the Office. Putting the needs of the College community first is vital to our College system. As the College is developing new Core Values, it is critical that the value concepts are in keeping with the best interests of the students.

The current 2011/12 annual report highlights Fanshawe College’s and the FSU’s objectives of resolving difficulties or disputes in an amicable, fair and transparent manner. The Office is very appreciative of the support it receives from both the College and the FSU. As always, the Office accepts and requests feedback and support for its recommendations.



Update on Prior Recommendations - Work in Progress

2009-2010 Recommendation One:

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.

The College is supportive of this recommendation. It has been prioritized amongst IT projects and initiatives. A project team is being assembled and implementation is anticipated for fall 2013.

2009-2010 Recommendation Two:

To create an Academic Integrity educational course and an evaluation method to be electronically accessible to all college community members that outlines to the learner what is the College's definition of academic integrity, how students may adhere to academic integrity principles, what the College considers academic violation, and the consequences of each offence. The completion of the course may be used as an alternative resolution to a first level offence and fulfill the College's obligation of educating students in suspected academic violation cases.

The College confirms that the introductory phase of the Academic Integrity course is complete and additional modules are currently under development. The project team is attempting to create an innovative approach using animation and narration, as opposed to just text as found in other on-line courses. The College states, "The content of this important topic is being developed to be engaging with students by using an appealing visual style of animation and narration." The College anticipates the production work will be complete by the end of the winter 2013 semester.

2010-2011 Recommendation:

To incorporate the "Duty of Care" concept and the "act in the best interest of the student" belief in the most appropriate college policies and documents.

College Council accepted this recommendation following due consideration, a motion, and vote. The concept and belief are being reflected in policies that are under review. Furthermore, the College – Student Union Committee is considering the amendment of the Fanshawe College Rights and Responsibilities Statement to include this type of concept and belief.

Vignette

Samantha, a graduate of a one-year preparatory program, currently attending a career program believes she was experiencing unfair treatment. As part of the career program, students are prepared for a professional certification exam, which is an entry requirement to the employment field.

Samantha completed her second semester and reviewed her end of term transcripts. At this point, Samantha realizes she has hit a road bump while pursuing her dream. Upon reviewing her second semester transcript grades, Samantha discovered she failed one course and her academic standing directed her to re-apply.

Upon a more thorough review, Samantha realized that she failed one course by less than a percent. Samantha was disappointed. She began investigating options to complete her program. According to the program practice, students are limited to one upgrade opportunity during their entire 3-year program. Samantha already used her one upgrade option in the first semester.

Samantha believed her situation seemed unfair. Samantha arranged to meet with a program official to seek some guidance. After explaining that they are bound by "their program practice," it was suggested to Samantha that she repeat the preparatory program. No other options were presented, (e.g. upgrade, grade appeal, review exams for any missing marks, or a referral to the Office of the Ombuds) and Samantha believed she was not being treated fairly.

Upon checking with other College officials, Samantha was convinced that repeating the preparatory program was her only choice, if she wanted to enter her desired profession. She would then have to apply and be accepted, again into the career program. Feeling that there were no alternatives to pursue, Samantha applied and was accepted in the one-year preparatory program that she had previously completed successfully.

After successfully completing the preparatory program for a second time, and improving her grades from a B average to an A average, Samantha then applied to her career program of choice. Samantha received a letter from the "Admissions Team" one month after submitting her application and the letter stated that she would not be admitted. Samantha did not understand the decision, as she had followed the direction provided, completed the preparatory program and improved her grade average.

Samantha was very upset with the decision. Having heard about the Office of the Ombuds, she decided to make an appointment to explore her situation. She told her story and provided the documentation she had been given to ensure there was mutual understanding of her situation.

Options were brainstormed. Samantha decided to challenge the decision not to admit her to the program, as she needed to understand the basis for the decision. A framework, criteria for decision-making process was provided to Samantha to assist her in preparing a letter requesting clarification and rationale for the decision.

Samantha also provided additional information that demonstrated her strong desire and motivation in completing the program. In particular, she outlined the work she had done to better prepare herself for the career program of her choice. Shortly after sending her letter, Samantha received another letter admitting her to the career program.

Samantha was glad she had the opportunity to brainstorm through her options, present additional information for consideration and express the reasons why she believed the admission decision was unfair, given her situation. Samantha now believes that the College treated her fairly, as the initial decision reconsidered in her favour, having regard for the facts presented.

This case may provide an opportunity to assess the need for the College to validate decision-making criteria within its program practices, thereby, promoting a consistent decision-making model.



Honing College Decision-Making Processes

The principles highlighted in the Fanshawe College Rights and Responsibilities Statement helps shape policies, practices and processes. Within the context of administrative and academic decision-making, the College follows the principles outlined in this statement to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all students. As College officials make decisions, occasionally students may encounter situations that seem unfair, on the surface. In these situations, students may seek the assistance of the Office of the Ombuds.

There were 307 visitors seeking assistance from the Ombuds in the 2011/12 academic year. This number remained relatively the same, as compared to the previous two years. Of the number of matters raised, concerns falling within the Office's mandate also remained relatively the same. Interestingly, the number of concerns resolved, with, and without direct intervention of the Ombuds remained the same in this time.

The Ombuds started measuring fairness concerns in the 2009/10 academic year. Capturing information in this manner is a new approach. The goal of this approach is to begin to understand perceptions of fairness within the College community, once the predominant types of concerns are known.

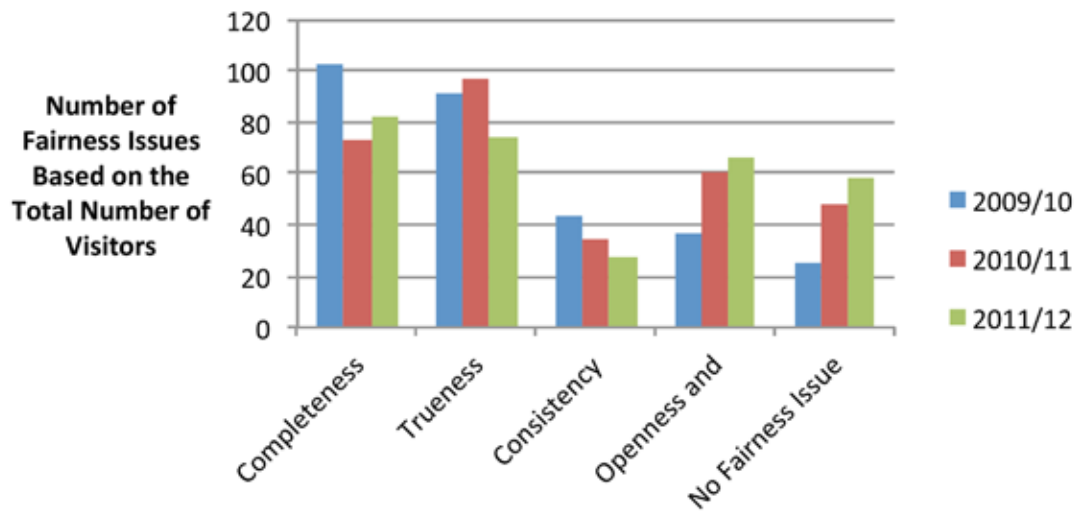
When visiting the Ombuds, students typically explain why they believe a particular situation is unfair, from their perspective. The fairness concern is then sorted in one of the following categories, previously defined the 2009/10 annual report:

1. Completeness of a practice or procedure,
2. Trueness of the application of policy,
3. Consistency of decision-making,
4. Openness and transparency.

When the Ombuds concludes that there is no fairness concern, despite the student's perception, the data is captured under a separate category of "no fairness issue identified." By including the no fairness category, visitor information may be presented in a balanced manner.

After careful review of the fairness categories over the past three years, there appears to be an increase in the number of visitors presenting information where no issues of fairness were identified or evident. This is a positive indicator for the College cultural environment. This positive trend is attributable to the increased awareness of the College's Rights and Responsibility Statement.

Diagram 1: Fairness Issues per Visitors:



Note: Please see the 2009/10 annual report for category definitions.

Based on the information presented in the diagram above, the bar chart suggests that the Completeness category is an area that may warrant closer attention. The Office took an in-depth look at the cases found under this category and the visitor's perception of the fairness concerns typically focused on their lack of understanding of a particular practice, process, or procedure.

These situations may be easily addressed by providing students with clearer information of practices, procedures or processes. Take for example a decision making process used in academic or administrative decisions and consider how the perception of fairness may be enhanced by promoting the decision-making process used:



The Office contends that if the simple objective decision-making process above was applied to the scenario described in the Vignette, the student may not have had a fairness concern. In other words, a fairness concern may have been avoided if the decision process was clearer and the student was aware of the objective criteria used in the decision.

Safeguarding the positive perceptions of fairness within the College community is important for many reasons and the Ombuds acknowledges this need. For this reason, the Office will start promoting this type of decision-making model throughout the College Community. The Ombuds will also continue to coach students, thereby empowering them to resolve their own concerns by working collaboratively with all College decision-makers.

Recommendation

In support of promoting positive perceptions of fairness, the Office of the Ombuds believes College community members may benefit from the development of a fairness course.

This course may incorporate concepts introduced in previous annual reports and academic plans, such as:

- the Fanshawe College Rights and Responsibilities Statement,
- categorizing fairness matters,
- taking care while acting in the best interest of students,
- how to prevent fairness concerns,
- how to make fair decisions,

while highlighting the College expectations and value system. The Office of the Ombuds would be pleased to lead a project team and assist with the assessment of learning needs within the College community and provide fairness content for the creation of a fairness course.

The Office of the Ombuds recommends the development and promotion of an on-line fairness course, which includes educational components that will be available to all College community members, free of charge.



2011/12 General Trends and Data Observations:

The 2011/12 academic year marks the third year that the Office is using a case management and data capture system. The Office has been collecting data in the same manner for the past three years. The data capturing system is producing rich data information, having regard for fairness. However, it is too early to identify any significant trends, at this time.

Please keep in mind, as you review the information in this section, that the data is essentially limited to information collected from the Office's interaction with its visitors. Bar charts are the predominant method of presenting the data. When reviewing the informational charts, please pay close attention to whether the information relates to visitors or visits. It is also very important not to make any decisions or draw any conclusions based on the information presented, until there is a full and mutual understanding of the data.

For the purposes of the following charts and annual report, a visitor is defined as an individual who has met with the Ombuds within the academic year. The visitor must link the need to meet to a substantive student-related matter. General enquiries are encouraged and welcomed; however, there is no data collection on this type of Office activity.

As previously mentioned in this report, the total number of visitors has remained relatively consistent over the past three years at 299, 312, and 307, respectively. There was the exact same number of visits in the past two years. Please see the following diagram and the Office's interpretation of the data arrangement.

Diagram 2: Visitors

	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

Diagram 2 charts the total number of visitors for each of the past three years. It includes whether the visitor presented a fairness situation inside or outside the Office's mandate. Of the student related matters considered within the Office's mandate, the chart highlights whether the resolution was resolved with or without direct intervention from the Ombuds.

Resolution without direct intervention means that student self-advocates, within the Ombuds coaching model. Resolution with direct intervention means that the Ombuds was compelled to facilitate a resolution meeting, make a referral to an internal or external resource, make inquiries or investigate a particular situation.

Diagram 3: Visitor Gender

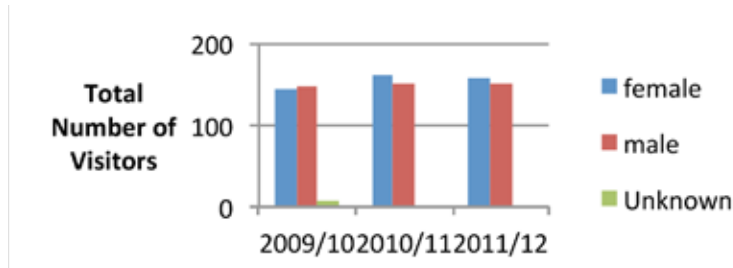


Diagram 3 confirms there is a relatively equal number of female and male visitors during each of the past three years. The unknown category found under the 2009/10 data column is a result of the number of anonymous visitors, and data regarding gender was not collected.

Diagram 4: Visitor by Area of Study

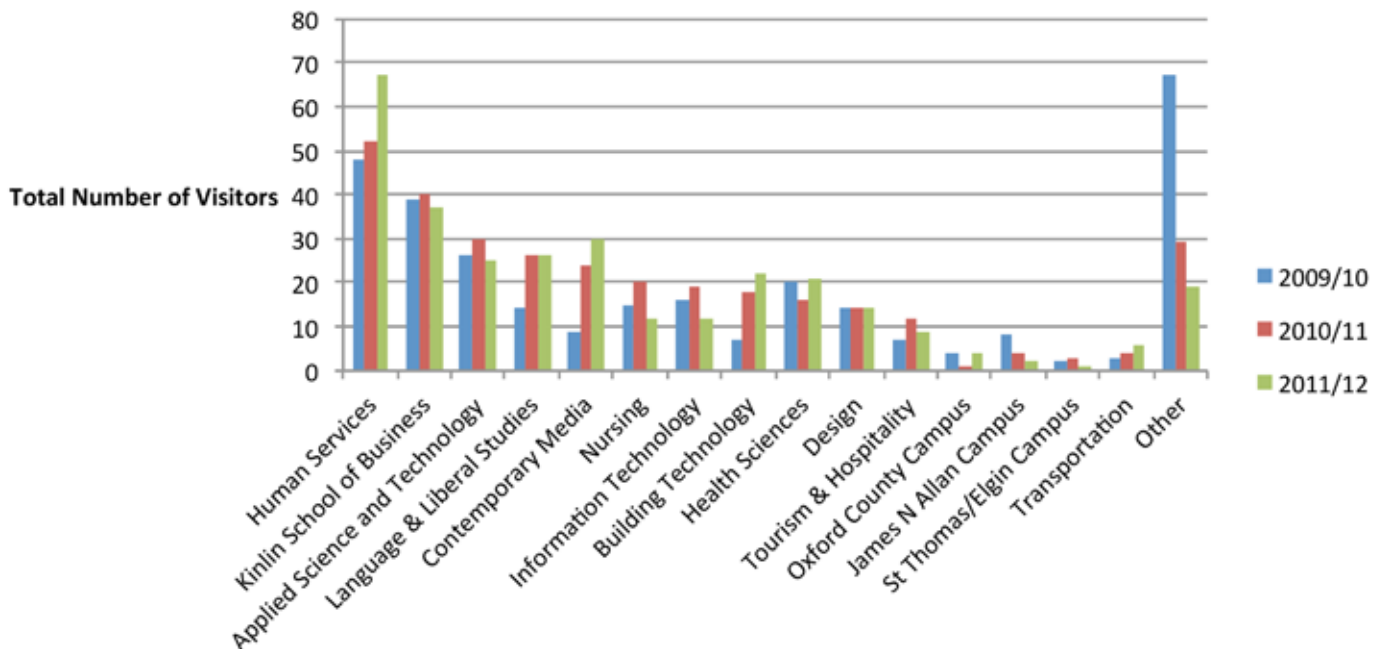


Diagram 4 represents the number of visitors by area of study for the past three years. The largest number of visitors predominately studied in programs in Human Services and the Lawrence Kinlin School of Business. The largest increase in visitors next to Human Services was from Contemporary Media. The "Other" category experienced the sharpest decline, over the past 3 years.

This sharp decline is a result of the students' willingness to self-identify and the increased accuracy in data tracking by the Office. The "Other" category includes visitors that are not students.

The information presented is for demographic purposes and is not the area responsible for the difficulty or dispute. For example, if a nursing student expresses a concern regarding a bus pass, the visitor will be categorized in nursing and the concern will be categorized under the Area Responsible chart found later in this section.

Diagram 5: Visitor by SEM Persona Group

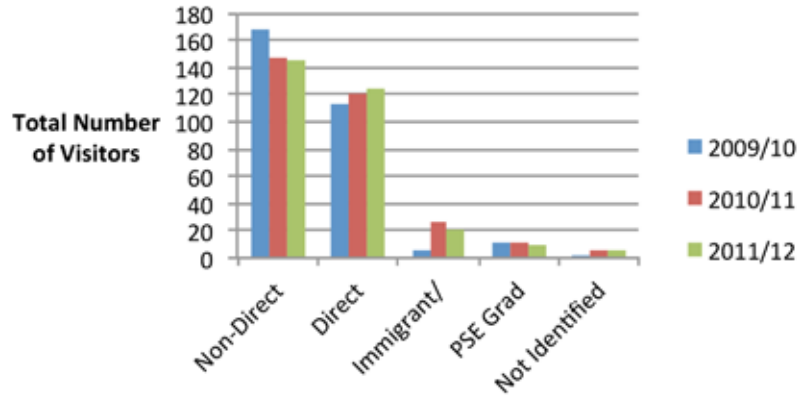


Diagram 5 sorts out visitors by SEM Persona Groups. The Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan identifies four persona demographics that are important for the College to understand. These persona groups have been identified so that the College may understand their unique needs, from a fairness perspective.

Diagram 6: Visitor Self-Identifying Additional Characteristics

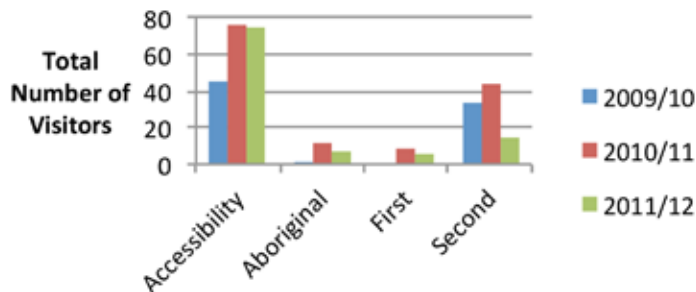


Diagram 6 captures information regarding the self-identification of accessibility needs, aboriginal descent, first generation attending post-secondary schooling and second career-sponsored students. The collection of Additional Information pertaining to each visitor is done at the time of the visit. It is dependent on whether the information was freely shared with the Ombuds.

Diagram 7: Visitor GPA Ranges

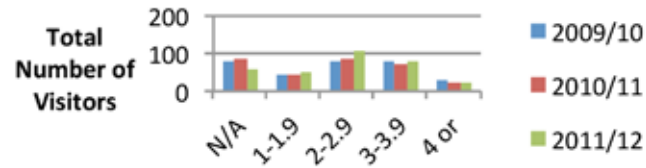
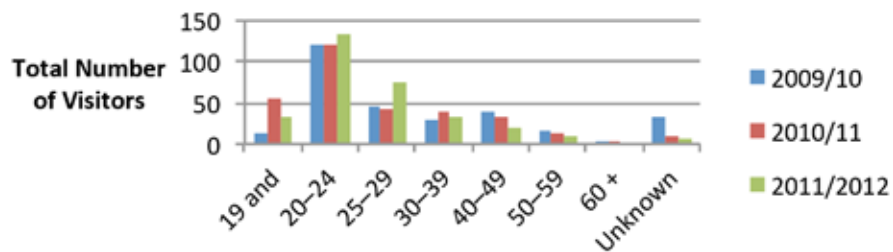


Diagram 7 charts the visitor's Grade Point Average (GPA) distribution. If the visitor is not a student, they are categorized under N/A. The N/A category also includes first term students and continuing education students where GPAs were not calculated at the time of the visit. Information regarding the student's GPA is collected directly from the College's database. The distribution of the student's GPA is somewhat surprising to the Office, as it is not expected that the majority of students have a better than a GPA 2.0, let alone the large number of students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Diagram 8: Visitor Age Ranges



The graph shown as diagram 8 demonstrates the age distribution of students as at August 31, 2012. It is not surprising that the largest category includes students who are between the ages of 20 to 24 years of age.



Diagram 9: Visitor Nature of Difficulty or Dispute

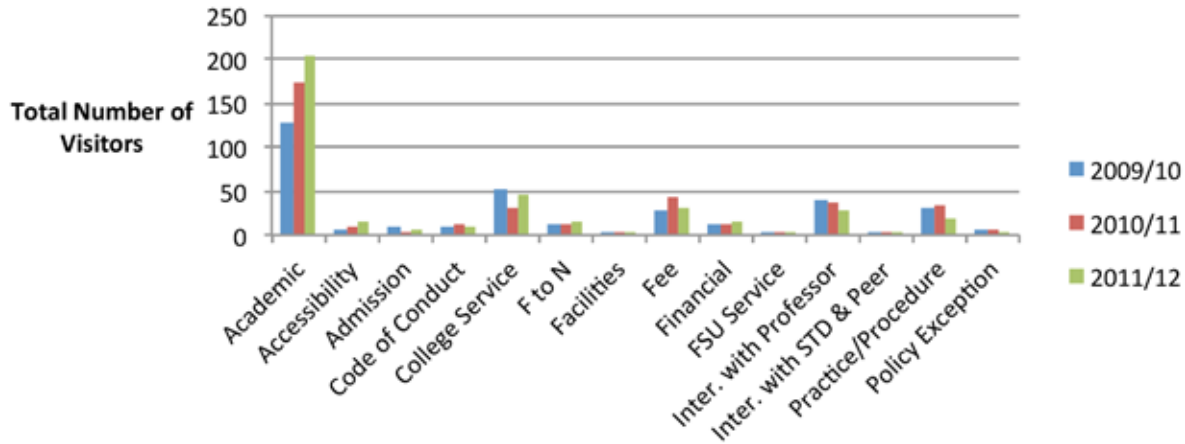
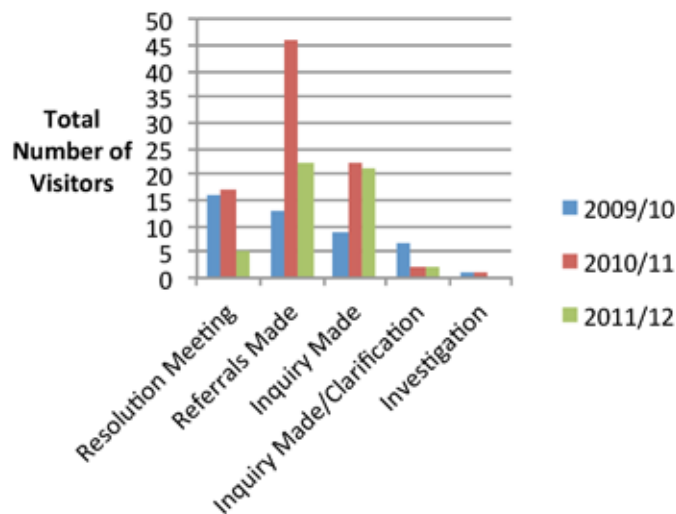


Diagram 9 confirms that most concerns being raised to the Ombuds are academically related. Other noteworthy areas of difficulty or dispute fall within the College service, fees, interpersonal relationship issues with the professor and practices/procedures. Of the academically related matters, most were grade appeals.

The goal of the Office is to help prepare the visitors to resolve their own difficulty or dispute. In the case of F to N grade change requests and fee appeal requests, students are provided a value added service. Often, the Ombuds will provide a framework for a letter to request, respectfully either an F to N or a fee appeal request.

Diagram 10: Ombuds Intervening on Behalf of Visitor



Once there is an understanding that the visitor’s concerns fall within the Office’s mandate, the Ombuds gathers relevant information and interests through a story telling exercise. By coaching the visitor through a problem solving process, they identify their own choices and ideal remedy. Only in the more challenging situations, may the Ombuds intervene by investigating, making inquiries, or facilitating a conversation. Otherwise, the Ombuds coaches visitors to self-advocate and pursue their own interests.

Diagram 11: Student Coaching Sessions

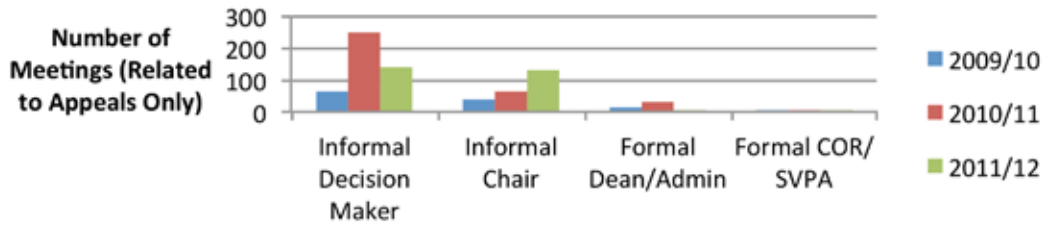
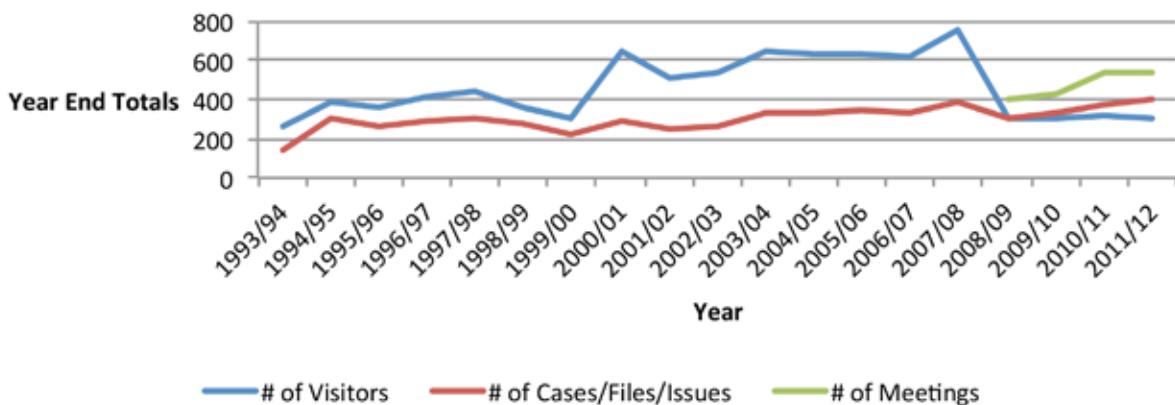


Diagram 11 relates to student coaching meetings as they initiate and transition through the appeal process. The categories align with the informal and formal step of the College’s appeal policy. This chart demonstrates the number of meetings that have been held to prepare students for the appeal meeting(s). This chart is significant as it shows that most appeals are resolved with the decision maker or the Chair/Manager. Very few appeal progress to the Formal level.

Diagram 12: Historical Charting of the Number of Visits, Issues and Meeting

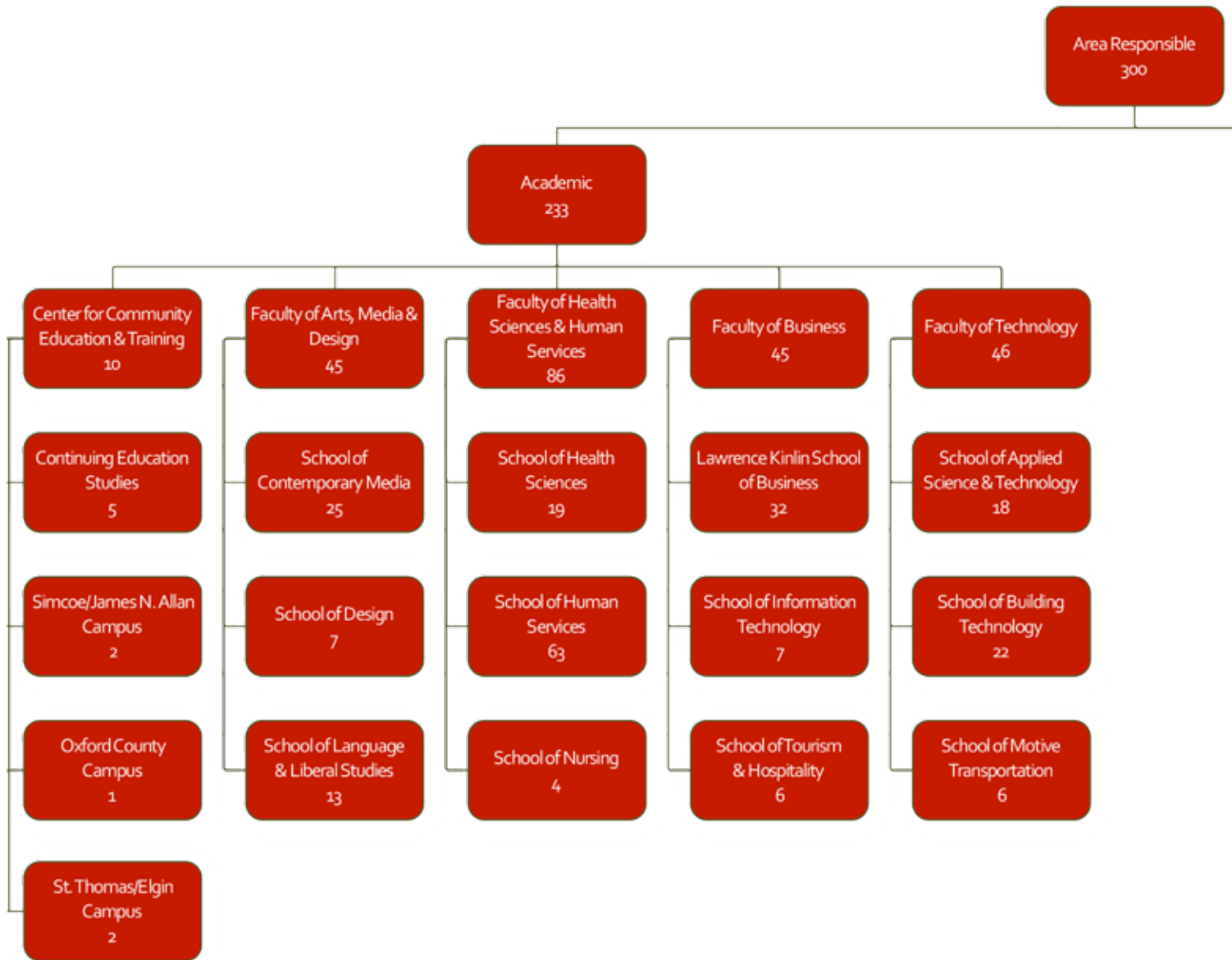


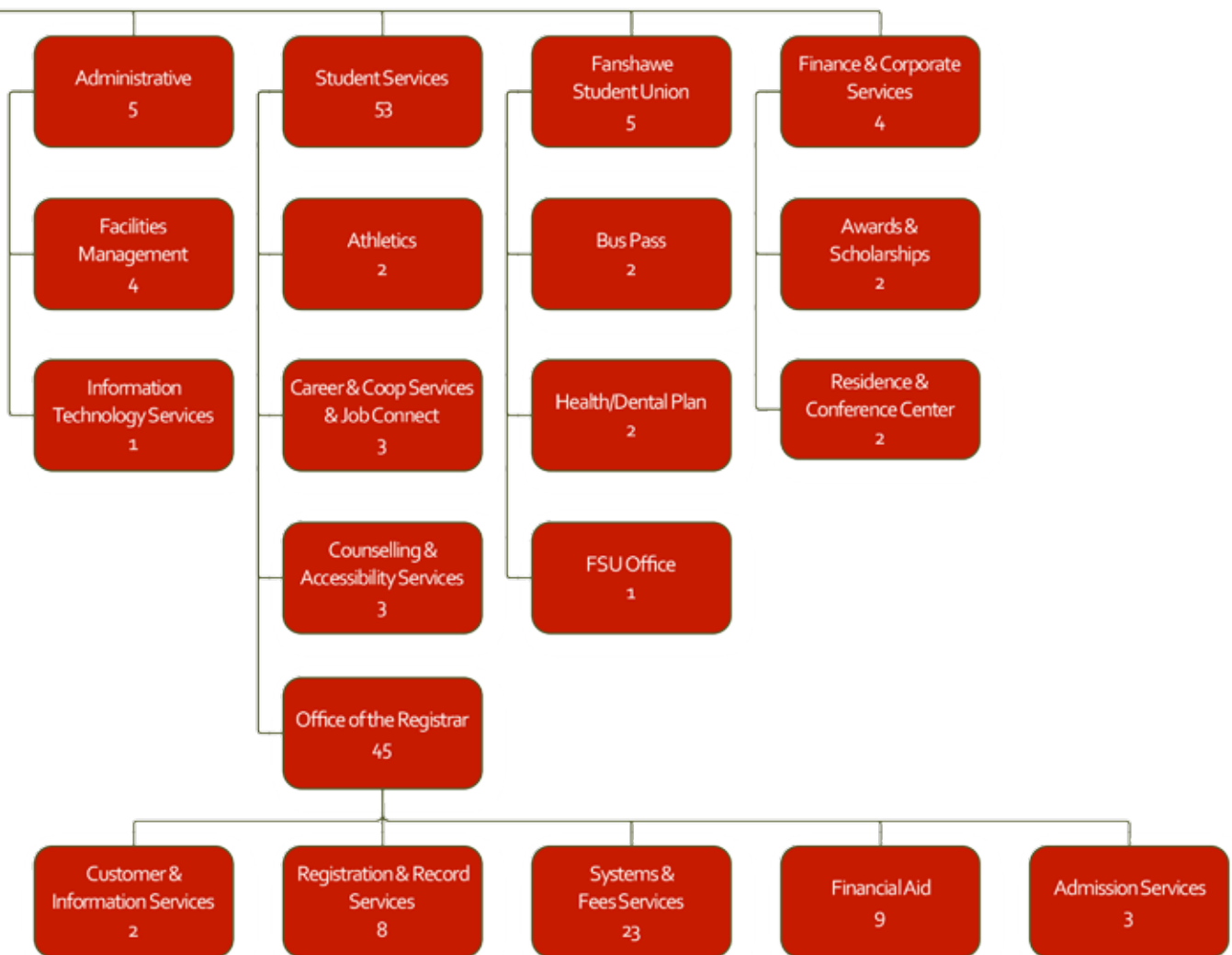
The information highlighted in diagram 12 provides an interesting historical perspective of the level of Office activities since the creation of the Office in 1993. There have been three predominant Ombuds since 1993. The first Ombuds essentially held the position from 1993/94 to 1999/00. The second Ombuds held the position from 2000/01 to 2007/08 and the third Ombuds is reporting data from 2008/09 to date. Within the most recent period, the total number of visits dramatically increased from 423 to 535 from the first year to the second year.

If you look closely, the line charts suggests there are three eras of reporting data. Surprisingly the number of cases/files/issues has remained relatively flat. The number of visitors chart line runs parallel to the number of cases in the first era with the first Ombuds jumps up in the second era with the second Ombuds, yet remains somewhat parallel in the second era. The third era with the third Ombuds, the number of visitors inverts with the number of issues raised.

The line charts in each era reflect the methodology of reporting data and mandates during each era. For example, in the third era, the Ombuds would only deal with student related matters, whereas in the second era, the Ombuds would deal with both student and faculty related matters.

Diagram 13: Area Responsible for the Difficulty or 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.

Appendix I: Business Plan Update

The Office has been very diligent in its efforts to meet business plan objectives originally outlined in the 2008-2009 annual report. Currently, the office is approximately three years into the five-year plan presented in the context of a short range, medium and long-range plan. All the short-range plans are complete and many of the medium range plans have come to fruition.

The office continues to operate with its day-to-day activities and the entire original objectives in mind. Since we have arrived at the mid-point of the Office's 5-year plan, it is now prudent to review the long-range plans and determine which objectives are still relevant and meaningful to the College and to the FSU.

A review of the Office's business plan and objectives is quite timely, as the College is currently revisiting and enriching its Vision and Mission statement, along with its core values. The Ombuds will work quite closely with the Office's advisory committee to validate any remaining objectives and confirm any new and emerging priorities.



Appendix II: Fanshawe College Rights and Responsibilities Statement (2012)

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:

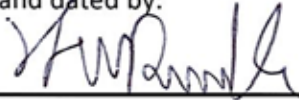
- treat members of the College community with respect
- follow all reasonable direction provided by the College and/or FSU
- be engaged in the pursuit of learning within an ordered academic environment
- adhere to the Student Code of Conduct and other relevant College/FSU practices, policies and procedures
- 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

College and FSU have the responsibilities to:

- abide by all applicable federal, provincial and municipal law
- provide an environment conducive to learning that is safe, secure and accessible; suitable and reasonable for learning, study and wellness
- commit to guidelines, practices, policies and procedures that support the best interest of students and 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

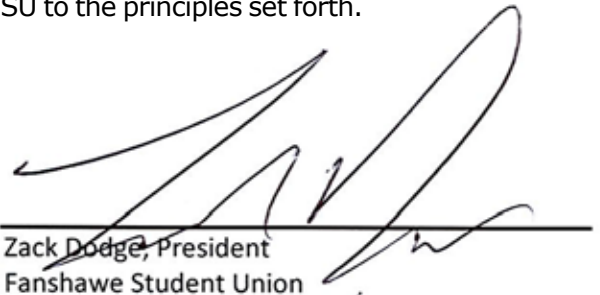
The College and the FSU will meet annually to review and, if both parties agree, to renew the Statement. In signing this document, the Presidents are committing the College and the FSU to the principles set forth.

Signed and dated by:



Howard Rundle, President
Fanshawe College

Date: Apr. 17, 2012



Zack Dodge, President
Fanshawe Student Union

Date: April 16th / 2012

Appendix III: Appreciation

After writing each annual report over the past few years, I reflect upon the various fairness challenges seen within the College community. These challenges are situations that any large academic organization faces. I am very appreciative of those who acknowledge the opportunities to pursue fairness matters and truly remain student focused when faced with these challenges.

The Office would be remiss if it did not recognize the support and collaboration from the College and FSU in ensuring the Office of the Ombuds is the go to place to help resolve and remedy student related difficulties and disputes. Thank you.



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Office of the Ombuds

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