

OMBUDS OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT 2002-2003

The ombudsperson handled 18 cases during the 2002-2003 calendar year. For 8 cases the complainant was either a graduate or undergraduate student, with 6 of the 8 involving disputes over grades for a specific exam, project or course. The other 2 cases from students involved conflict with WPI support services. The ombudsperson provided listening, reality checks and most often coaching and rehearsing the student in effective ways to interact and follow up with the individual(s) where conflict exists. It was infrequent to actually have contact with the faculty member (or support person) but this did occur twice. Feedback from serving students has generally been positive.

For 9 cases, the complainant was either a faculty or staff member with 5 of the 9 involving conflicts tied to performance review or the process of terminating an employee. Other cases involved conflicts over interpersonal communication styles and issues regarding intellectual property. Most often the service would first involve listening and coaching and then mediation sessions between the parties in conflict.

Finally, 1 case did not involve a complainant but a supervisor/department head type who simply used the ombudsperson as a confidential sounding board for their own plans in resolving conflict within their area of responsibility.