

Academic Ombud's Report to the Senate

Thank you Professor McCormick, Senators and guests.

It is my pleasure to present the Academic Ombud Report for the 2016 – 2017 academic year. Before submitting this summary of the activities of the Ombud's Office, I wish to thank Laura Anschel for her excellent work in the Ombud's Office and for the statistical report, which will be included in the senate minutes for your future reference.

My work as Academic Ombud ended on June 30, 2017. I am honored to have served in the position for three years. I greatly enjoyed the work and my opportunity to meet with and advise students, faculty, and staff about student academic rights. Laura Anschel's work during this period was essential to the work of the Ombud's Office. I am delighted to introduce and welcome Dr. Joe McGillis of the College of Medicine as our new Academic Ombud. I know that many of you are familiar with the great work that Joe has done on the Faculty Senate and the Senate Council. I am confident that Joe will do outstanding work in the position.

This annual report provides four categories of information that summarize the work performed by the Office of the Academic Ombud during the year. The first category presents the total number of matters handled by the Office during the year. Within this category, we have distinguished between "Cases" and "Questions or Referrals." This latter category includes a wide variety of minor matters that take less than one hour to resolve. Virtually all of the matters in this latter group are handled by Ms. Anschel. We calculated that there were 2,324 such minor matters during the past academic year. This number reflects a 39.5% increase above last year's number. We believe that part of this increase is a consequence of better records of such contacts. The number of cases that took more than one hour and typically involved work by both the Ombud and Ms. Anschel for the 2016-17 academic year was 455, a reduction of 11.6% compared to last year.

This number, 455, includes all appeals that were considered by the Ombud prior to being adjudicated by the University Appeals Board. Those appeals are specifically identified in the other two categories of information provided in this report: the number of academic offense cases, including appeals, and the number of submitted grade appeals. (A student may consult with the Ombud's Office about bringing a grade appeal and decide not to bring an appeal. This report accounts for such matters as one of the "Questions or Referrals" or as one of the "Cases," depending on how much time is spent on the matter.)

The first part of the report also provides information about the types of non-academic offense matters considered by the Office. Two types of information are provided about them: the subject of the matter and the source of the matter. This information is presented both for cases and for quick questions and referrals.

The second category of information relates to cases in which a University department determined that a student committed an academic offense. During the 2016-17 academic year, academic departments determined that an academic offense was committed in 135 cases. This number is greater than the number of academic offense cases for the past three years (92, 120, and 132). Six of the academic offense cases for 2016-17 were second offenses, and the remaining 129 cases were first offenses. Of the 129 first offenses, seventeen students were charged with a major offense resulting in a penalty of E, XE, dismissal, or expulsion. The report provides aggregated, anonymous information about the students who were

determined to have committed academic offenses and the Colleges that determined that the academic offenses had occurred.

Of the 135 academic offense cases, 115 students did not contact the Ombud's Office. The remaining twenty students contacted the Ombud's Office, and ten students decided to appeal the charge to the University Appeals Board. (Two of the ten appeals were subsequently withdrawn and three appeals are pending before the University Appeals Board.) Of the five academic offense cases decided by the University Appeals Board, two involved cheating and three involved plagiarism. Of the two students who appealed the charge of cheating, one appeal was upheld in part and one was denied. Of the three students who appealed the charge of plagiarism, one appeal was upheld and the other two were denied.

The third category is comprised of information about claims of academic rights violations submitted by students. Before being considered by the University Appeals Board, these claims are first reviewed by the Ombud who decides whether the appeal has merit or lacks merit. If the Ombud decides that an appeal lacks merit, the student may appeal that no-merit decision to the University Appeals Board. There were a total of eleven grade appeals during the 2016-17 year. The Ombud determined that five had merit and six lacked merit. Of the five determined by the Ombud to have merit, four were upheld by the University Appeals Board. Of the six appeals determined by the Ombud to lack merit, three students did not appeal the no-merit decisions. Students appealed three no-merit decisions. These three no-merit decisions were upheld by the University Appeals Board. There was one other appeal concerning the violation of academic rights. One student appealed the dismissal from an academic program of the University. The Ombud decided that this appeal had merit and the appeal was upheld by the University Appeals Board.

The final category of information is a summary of the total number of cases (academic offense appeals and grade appeals) that the Ombud transmitted to the University Appeals Board. This summary table repeats information presented earlier in the report.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this annual report and for the honor to have served as the Academic Ombud.



Michael P. Healy
Professor
College of Law

Academic Ombud Services Statistical Report
Michael Healy 2016/17

All Matters

	2016/17	2015/16		
Number of Cases	455	481		
Number of Questions or Referrals	2324	1666		
	2779	2147	Total	

Types of Cases	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	
Non-Academic Offense Issues	320	389	250	365	346	
Academic Offense Determinations	135	92	120	132	191	
	455	481	370	497	537	Total

Description of Cases (not including Academic Offenses)					
Attendance	19		Student	189	
Exam/Class Requirements	21		Faculty	96	
Grades	82		Staff	19	
Instruction	15		Parent	10	
Personal Problems	10		Other	6	
Policies: Academic Offense Issues	28			320	Total
Policies: General	62				
Progress/Promotion	52				
Retroactive Withdrawals	3				
Speaker Requests	28				
	320	Total			

Description of Quick Questions & Referrals					
Attendance	248		Student	1399	
Exam/Class Requirements	148		Faculty	615	
Grades	548		Staff	168	
Instruction	97		Parent	110	
Personal Problems	74		Other	32	
Policies: Academic Offense Issues	251			2324	Total
Policies: General	530				
Progress/Promotion	382				
Retroactive Withdrawals	46				
	2324	Total			

Determinations and Appeals of Academic Offenses

Types of Academic Offense Determinations

Cheating	54	
Plagiarism	81	
	135	Total

Contact with the Ombud

No Contact with the Ombud	115	
Contacted the Ombud: No appeal	10	
Contacted the Ombud: Referred to UAB	10	
	135	Total

Classification of the Student	First w/ Minor Penalty	First w/ Major Penalty	Second	Total	
Freshman	28	0	0	28	
Sophomore	21	2	1	24	
Junior	31	8	0	39	
Senior	27	6	4	37	
Graduate Student	5	1	1	7	
	112	17	6	135	Total

Origin of Offense Determination

College of Agriculture, Food and Environment	3	
College of Arts & Sciences	68	
Gatton College of Business & Economics	6	
College of Communication & Information	8	
College of Education	4	
College of Engineering	32	
College of Fine Arts	1	
College of Health Sciences	6	
College of Nursing	1	
College of Public Health	6	
	135	Total

Appeals of Determination of Academic Offense Referred to the University Appeals Board

	Upheld	Denied	Total	
Plagiarism: Appealed severity of sanction	1		1	
Plagiarism: Appealed determination		1	1	
Plagiarism: Appealed severity of sanction and determination		1	1	
Cheating: Appealed severity of sanction				
Cheating: Appealed determination		1	1	
Cheating: Appealed severity of sanction and determination	1*		1	
			5	Total

**partially upheld*

Allegation of Violation of Student Academic Rights

Grade Appeals Referred to the University Appeals Board

	Uncontested	Upheld	Denied	Total	
Appeals referred and determined to have merit	n/a	4	1	5	
Appeals referred and determined to lack merit	3	3	0	6	
				11	Total

Retroactive Withdrawal Appeals Referred to the University Appeals Board

	Upheld	Denied	Total	
Appeal referred and determined to have merit	0	0	0	
			0	Total

Appeal of Dismissal Referred to the University Appeals Board

	Upheld	Denied	Total	
Appeal referred and determined to have merit	1		1	
			1	Total

Summary of Cases Referred by the Ombud to the University Appeals Board

Total Number of Appeals

Academic Offense Appeals	5	(2 Upheld / 3 Denied)
Grade Appeals	11	(7 Upheld / 1 Denied / 3 Uncontested)
Retroactive Withdrawal Appeals	0	
Other Appeals (Dismissal)	1	(Upheld)
	17	Total

Academic Offense Appeals Referred to the University Appeals Board

	Upheld	Denied	Total
Plagiarism: Appealed severity of sanction	1		1
Plagiarism: Appealed determination		1	1
Plagiarism: Appealed severity of sanction and determination		1	1
Cheating: Appealed severity of sanction			
Cheating: Appealed determination		1	1
Cheating: Appealed severity of sanction and determination	1		1
			5 Total

Grade Appeals Referred to the University Appeals Board

	Upheld	Denied	Uncontested	Total
Appeals referred and determined to have merit	4	1	n/a	5
Appeals referred and determined to lack merit	3		3	6
				11 Total