

Celebrating Ombuds in Higher Education: ACCUO 1983-2013

Ever since the creation in 1965 at Simon Fraser University of the first ombudsman in a North American institution, Canadian ombuds in colleges and universities have looked inside and outside their sectorial and geographical borders to build regional, national and international links with other ombuds. On its 30th anniversary, ACCUO has compiled a snapshot of its activities, encounters and some landmarks in the development of ombuds in higher education in Canada and many parts of the world.

This is a work in progress. We would be happy to hear about other Canadian or international offices not listed in this brief overview.

| Ombuds in Canadian Higher Education | ACCUO Landmarks | Other Ombuds Landmarks |
|--|---|--|
| <p>1960s</p> <p>1965</p> <p><i>Simon Fraser University</i></p> <p>Inspired by the legislative ombuds concept newly adopted in New Zealand, students at Simon Fraser University create the first ombudsman at a North American institution:</p> <p><i>...the best answer for the little man's grievances against maladministration.</i></p> <p>(Mallin, 1965)</p> | <p>ACCUO's roots are nourished by the legislative ombudsman concept established in Sweden in 1809, developed in Scandinavian countries, and adopted by New Zealand in 1962 before its implantation in North America in the 1960s.</p> <p>Student leadership has played a key role in the establishment and development of ombuds offices in Canadian higher education. The first position is created in 1965 by students at Simon Fraser University (SFU), British Columbia. They elect student John Mynott as first ombudsman.</p> <p>Today, approximately 40% of ombuds offices are the product of a joint funding agreement between students and their institution.</p> | <p>1809 Creation of the first legislative ("classical") ombudsman office in Sweden. Lars Augustin Mannerheim becomes the first ombudsman on March 1, 1810.</p> <p>1920 First ombudsman in Finland.</p> <p>1955 Denmark establishes an ombudsman.</p> <p>1962 Norway and New Zealand establish ombudsmen.</p> <p>1966 Eastern Montana College creates the first ombudsman in a US higher education institution. Michigan State University follows in 1967.</p> <p>1967 The first Canadian legislative ombudsmen are created in the provinces of Alberta and New Brunswick, followed by Quebec in 1968 and Manitoba in 1969.</p> |

1970s

1971

Concordia University
University of Alberta
Carleton University
Dalhousie University

1973

Université du Québec à Montréal

1974

University of Western Ontario

1975

University of Toronto

1978

McMaster University
University of Victoria

1979

Algonquin College

1971

After SFU in BC, ombuds offices are created at four other institutions, in Quebec, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia, seeding the Canadian academic sector ombudsman coast to coast.

At Concordia, then 'Sir George Williams University' and 'Loyola College', ombuds are established in the spring of 1971 by the Boards of Governors, at Sir George in the wake of the 'Computer Riot' of 1969. After the institutions merge in 1975, the offices are combined in 1978 and serve staff, faculty and students.

In September 1971, the University of Alberta appoints physicist Dr. D.B. Scott as first full-time ombudsman to handle complaints from students and staff.

At Carleton University, students create the first office in 1971, which becomes a joint student-university office in 1972.

At Dalhousie, the student-staffed office reports through a joint (student-university) advisory committee.

1979

The **First Canadian Conference of College and University Ombudsmen** is held at Concordia, drawing 150 participants from Canadian and US institutions. Proceedings include articles on: *Why an Ombudsman, The Student as Consumer, Ombudsman Headaches, The Right to Privacy, and Justice in the University* (Ed. Suzanne Belson).

1970s

Almost all Canadian provinces establish legislative ombudsman offices.

1971

In response to disruptions on US campuses and to provide mechanisms for the fair handling complaints, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education recommends the creation of ombudsmen in US universities.

1973

First meeting and founding of the **California Caucus of College and University Ombudspersons (CCCUO)** or 'Cal Caucus' at Asilomar, Pacific Grove, California.

Circa 1974

First meeting of the Midwest college and university Ombuds group (precursor to UCOA). A second Midwest group forms in 1992 to organize yearly summer meetings.

1976

First International Ombudsman Conference, held in Edmonton, Alberta (public sector ombudsmen).

1977

The University of New England is the first Australian institution to establish an ombudsman.

1978

The **International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)** is established at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. IOI provides a forum for independent public sector ombudsmen at the local, regional or national level. It publishes occasional papers. Edmonton serves as IOI's headquarters until 2009 when IOI moves to Vienna. The University of Alberta library still holds IOI archives.)

Today, the jurisdiction of some public sector ombuds includes higher education institutions, e.g. provincial ombuds offices in British Columbia and Newfoundland & Labrador; Australian State ombudsmen; and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (which publishes compulsory model complaint handling procedures for institutions).

1980s

1981

Université Laval

*University of
Manitoba*

1987

Dawson College

McGill University

1988

Lakehead University

*Université de
Montréal*

1989

*University of New
Brunswick*

'Dean of Students'

*University of
Windsor*

1980s

Brock University

Douglas College

*Laurentian
University*

*University of
Waterloo*

1983

Founding of ACCUO (Association of Canadian College and University Ombudsmen) during the 2nd Canadian conference, at Concordia University.

From 1983 onward, ACCUO organizes annual conferences, singly or in partnership with other ombuds organizations. Members also meet at regional "mid-year" meetings.

1985

First issue of an ACCUO "newsletter". Printed newsletters were produced on an occasional basis until the 1990s when the email listserv became the main communication link between members.

1989

ACCUO changes its name to Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons.

1983-2013

Many ACCUO members have actively supported the development and promotion of ombuds practice in higher education through:

- outreach and education within and across institutions
- mentoring of new practitioners
- new ombuds workshops and information kits
- presentations and discussions of best practice nationally and internationally
- linkages with practitioners in related fields (education, law, mediation, counselling, faith communities, advocates, equity & human rights ...)
- planning of regional, national and international ombuds conferences, or other conferences on topics of interest to the higher education sector.

1980s

Ombuds from other parts of the US and from Canada start participating in Cal Caucus (CCCUCO) meetings.

1983

Spanish education reform leads to the creation of the ombuds role (defensor) in seven universities.

1984

Founding of the **University and College Ombuds Association (UCOA)**, USA.

1985

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) establishes the first ombudsman (defensor) at a Mexican University.

1986

University College Cork establishes a first ombuds position in Ireland.

1988

First issue of the *Journal of the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds* (CCCUCO). Christine McKee (U of Manitoba) is the first Canadian ombuds to contribute. Editor: Ron Wilson.

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| <h1>1990s</h1> <p>1992 <i>Bishop University</i> <i>Camosun College</i> <i>École Polytechnique de Montréal</i></p> <p>1993 <i>Fanshawe College</i> <i>Wilfred Laurier University</i></p> <p>1995 <i>Athabasca University</i></p> <p>1996 <i>Ryerson University</i></p> <p>1997 <i>Seneca College</i> <i>Université de Sherbrooke</i></p> | <p>1990 ACCUO adopts its first constitution. Frances Bauer becomes ACCUO's first president.</p> <p>1992 First joint ACCUO-UCOA conference, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA.</p> <p>1994 Second joint ACCUO-UCOA conference, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.</p> <p>1994-95 First ACCUO listserv created by Tom Austin (hosted at University of New Brunswick); hosted at University of Laval since 2001.</p> <p>1996 First North American Conference: ACCUO, CCCUO, CPS*, TOA*, UCOA, USOA*. St. Louis, Missouri, USA. Also known as the first Ombudsman Leadership Forum (OLF) conference.</p> <p>1999 ACCUO collaborates in Joint COA*-USOA Conference, Victoria, BC.</p> <p>ACCUO launches its website (Anita Pouliot and Frances Bauer).</p> | <p>1991 (approx.) UCOA adopts Ethical Principles.</p> <p>1995 UCOA publishes first edition of <i>The Ombuds Handbook</i> (a practical guide for ombuds in colleges and universities). Editors: Dalene Hoppe and Barry Culhane.</p> <p>1996 First national meeting of ombuds (defensores) in Spanish universities, Spain.</p> <p>Dutch Ministry recommends introducing ombuds offices in higher education institutions. Several positions are created. A 1999 law requires Dutch public higher education institutions to establish internal complaint procedures.</p> <p>1997 In the UK, the Dearing report recommends independent external review of higher education student complaints. The <i>Visitor</i>, the Queen or her representative has traditionally had jurisdiction over student complaints in universities.) Creation of the Austrian Student Ombudsman at the National Ministry of Higher Education. Education Act creates University Ombudsman in Malta.</p> <p>1998 The <i>CCCUO Journal</i> becomes the only peer-reviewed publication dedicated to ombudsing in higher education. Editors: Ron Wilson and Lois Price-Spratlen. UCOA adopts Standards of Practice. (date approx.) France creates national education and higher education ombudsman (médiateur). First ombuds at a Japanese institution: Keio University.</p> <p>1999 Creation of the ombudsman for research in Germany. Some German universities also create ombuds in the late 1990s. Creation of L'Association des ombudsmans des universités du Québec (AOUQ).</p> |
|--|---|--|

| 2000s | ACCUO Landmarks | Other Ombuds Landmarks |
|--|--|--|
| <p>2004 <i>HEC Montréal</i></p> | <p>2000 Second OLF Conference: ACCUO, COA, NASOP, TOA, UCOA, USOA, held in San Francisco, California. Conference planner: Suzanne Belson.</p> <p>ACCUO creates the Distinguished Service Award to recognize an individual or group who has made an extraordinary contribution to the development, support and/or furtherance of ombudsmanship in higher education. The pin features a portrait of Lars Mannenheim. First recipient: Suzanne Belson.</p> | <p>2000 Canadian Frances Bauer and four US ombuds contribute to a special edition of the <i>Negotiation Journal</i>.</p> <p>Creation of the Ombud Dean of Students Higher Education Association Australasia (OMDOSHEAA) and its listserv.</p> |
| <p>2005 <i>York University</i></p> | <p>2001 ACCUO is a founding member of FCO. Founders included Frances Bauer, Patrick Robardet and former ACCUO members Suzanne Belson and Liz Hoffman.</p> <p>Distinguished Service Award: Liz Hoffman.</p> | <p>2001 Launch of multi-sector Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO).</p> <p>Spanish law compels all public and private universities to institute ombuds offices (defensorías).</p> <p>Creation of the US-Canadian multi-sector North West Ombuds Group (NWOG).</p> |
| <p>2007 <i>Mount Royal College</i></p> | <p>2003 First of biennial joint FCO-ACCUO conferences.</p> | <p>2002 Florida compels universities and colleges to create ombuds.</p> <p>2003 Founding and first conference of the European Network for Ombudsmen in Higher Education (ENOHE), Amsterdam, NL.</p> |
| <p>2008 <i>Confederation College</i></p> | <p>2004 Distinguished Service Award: Frances Bauer.</p> <p>ACCUO and ENOHE begin developing links.</p> <p>2005 ACCUO publishes a guide to <i>Developing Terms of References for the Ombuds</i> in Canadian colleges and universities. (Ed. Shelley Lancaster & Marie-José Rivest)</p> | <p>2004 Higher Education Act sets up the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for all universities in England and Wales.</p> <p>2005 Founding of the Red de Defensores (...) de los Derechos Universitarios (REDDU) and first conference in Mexico.</p> <p>Merger between UCOA and TOA* to form IOA*.</p> |
| <p>2009 <i>University of British Columbia</i></p> | <p>2008 ACCUO celebrates its 25th anniversary with a first conference in the Maritimes: Halifax.</p> <p>Distinguished Service Award: Marie-José Rivest.</p> <p>2009 ACCUO creates the Special Contribution Award for service to ACCUO. First recipient: Ian Darling.</p> <p>Joint IOA-FCO-ACCUO conference in Montreal, Quebec: 200th anniversary of the ombudsman.</p> | <p>2006 First publication of the <i>ENOHE Occasional Papers</i>, followed in 2008 by first issue of ENOHE News (newsletter).</p> <p>2007 Founding of the Conferencia Estatal de Defensores Universitarios (CEDU), Spain.</p> <p>First REDDU bi-national conference with Spain, in Mexico.</p> <p>Law mandates appointment by students of student ombudsman in all Croatian higher education institutions.</p> <p>2009 Students from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and North America call on UNESCO for a global student ombudsman.</p> |

2010s

2010

*University of
Ottawa*

*University of
Calgary*

2010

First joint European-Canadian ENOHE-ACCUO conference, Vienna, Austria.

ACCUO and REDDU begin developing links.

Josef Leidenfrost (Austrian Student Ombudsman and ENOHE convener) becomes Official Friend of ACCUO.

Special Contribution Award: Kristen Robillard.

2011

Collaborative ENOHE-ACCUO issue of *ENOHE Occasional Papers (#7) "Common Objectives, Different Pathways: Embedding Ombudsman Principles and Practices in Higher Education Institutions."* Editors: Josef Leidenfrost & Martine Conway.

2012

ACCUO adopts Standards of Practice for ombuds in Canadian colleges and universities.

First joint ACCUO-NWOG western 'mid-year' meeting, Camosun College, Victoria, BC.

Special Contribution Awards: Marie Berryman and Anita Pouliot.

2013

Distinguished Service Award: **Shelley Lancaster**.

2010s

Through the leadership of ENOHE and REDDU, academic ombuds and delegates from approximately 14 European countries, 7 Latin American countries, Australia, Canada and the USA have had opportunities to develop links.

Ombuds in higher education vary in structure and jurisdiction. They exist at institutional or national levels. Their mandate focuses on students; or on a specific discipline, activity or population like the ombuds for research in Germany or the ombuds for overseas students in Australia; or it extends to the entire university or college community.

2010

First International Seminar on Human Rights in Higher Education, REDDU, Mexico.

Founding of the **Seminario Internacional sobre la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos y Universitarios (SIDDHU)** in Madrid, Spain. An international seminar for the study, protection and promotion of rights and human rights in universities. First directors: Dr. Leoncio Lara Sáenz, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and Dr. Rosa M. Galán Sánchez, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

2011

The Austrian Student Ombudsman is enshrined in law. Australian law creates the Overseas Student Ombudsman.

2012

UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) is granted the UNESCO Chair for developing a model to establish university ombudsmen in Latin America.

Amendment places universities and other publicly funded third-level colleges within national ombudsman oversight in Ireland (effective May 1, 2013).

Main Sources: This information was compiled for ACCUO by Martine Conway, Ombudsperson at the University of Victoria, with the help of ACCUO archivist Anita Pouliot, past and present ACCUO members and partners, international contacts and the following sources:

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| *Other | CPS / COA | Canadian Public Sector Ombudsmen / Canadian Ombudsman Association (Canadian public sector) |
| Acronyms | IOA | International Ombudsman Association (created in 2005 in merger of former US-based TOA and UCOA) |
| | NASOP | National Association of State Ombudsman Programs (US-based) |
| | TOA | The Ombudsman Association (until 2005; US-based) / created in 1982 as Corporate Ombudsman Association (COA) |
| | USOA | United States Ombudsman Association (public sector; US-based) |

Other Canadian Offices / Changes in Canadian Offices

Other ombuds (among them many student-funded and student-staffed ombuds) existed for various lengths of time, for example at: BCIT, Capilano College, Cariboo College, La Cité Collégiale, East Kootenay Community College, Humber College of Applied Arts, Institut national de la recherche scientifique (Université du Québec), Kwantlen College, Langara College, Northern Lights College, Okanagan College, University of Northern BC, University of Saskatchewan, Selkirk College, University of Prince Edward Island, Vancouver Community College. The UBC Alma Mater has had a student ombuds position since the 1980s. ACCUO membership has included equity officers and judicial officers from some institutions, e.g.: Cambrian College, Georgian College, University of Guelph, Queen's University; and student advocates, for example from BCIT, Simon Fraser University, University of Regina. Ombuds mandate changed to "student advocate" at University of New Brunswick (circa 2000) and University of Waterloo (circa 2008). Offices closed: Laurentian University in 1996; University of Windsor in 2009; University of Manitoba and Wilfred Laurier University in 2010.

Other International Offices: In addition to the offices mentioned in this overview, there are ombuds in (one or more) higher education institutions in Belgium, Brazil, Columbia, El Salvador, Italy, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland.

... Please help us complete this list by contacting Martine Conway at ombuddy@uvic.ca Thanks!