



# ACCUEO

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN  
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY  
OMBUDSPERSONS

## **JANUARY 2019 BULLETIN: ACCUEO honours long-term colleagues Lucie Allaire and Nora Farrell**

**ACCUEO Awards Committee:** George Cole (Algonquin College) has facilitated the awards nominations over several years, and recently volunteered to Chair the ACCUEO Awards Committee. Joining his committee are Anita Pouliot (Western U) and Shirley Nakata from (U British Columbia). If you would like to join this committee to review the criteria, selection process, and awards, please contact George right away at [coleg@algonquincollege.com](mailto:coleg@algonquincollege.com)

**International Committee** Chair Julie Boncompain (Concordia U, Montreal) and members: Martine Conway (U Ottawa), Anita Pouliot (Western U), Carolyn Brendon (McMaster U), and Brent Epperson (U Alberta), will be meeting to discuss their goals and strategies for 2019; there will be an update in the March Bulletin.

**Communications Team** Rob Thompson is the lead for the renamed Communications Team, including members Laura Reid (Simon Fraser), and Taylor Thomas (U Alberta). They would still like to recruit a member(s) from Quebec and/or the Maritimes. They are working with the ACCUEO executive on a nation-wide outreach project, to inform higher education institutions of the value of an ombuds office. If you are interested in joining the Communications Team, please contact Rob Thompson at [ombudsperson@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:ombudsperson@lakeheadu.ca)

**ACCUEO Website Research Project** The ACCUEO Executive will be drafting an overarching plan and schedule to review the entire ACCUEO website, examining for gaps, overlaps, and consolidating information for our members. If you have any comments, please send these to Carolyn Brendon at [ombuds@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ombuds@mcmaster.ca)

**FCO/ACCUEO Conference** The conference planning committee met in January and Martine Conway (U Ottawa), Co-Chair of the conference, will announce this shortly on the ACCUEO:listserv and on our ACCUEO website. The conference venue is in downtown Toronto at the Sheraton Centre, from April 15 to 17, 2019. Accommodation is available at a reduced rate at the Sheraton but will go quickly. If you are looking for accommodation at a lower price, it is recommended to check early or consider sharing a room. There will be a transportation information on the registration website to help you find your way to the Conference Centre. [http://www.ombudsmanforum.ca/en/?page\\_id=5134](http://www.ombudsmanforum.ca/en/?page_id=5134)

**Translation of ACCUO Correspondence and other Reading Materials** Every time the Executive meets and communicates with members, we must ensure that materials are in both official languages. Lucie Allaire has provided French translation over the past years, on a voluntary basis; the amount of time she has provided in this ongoing work is considerable. Realizing we cannot expect our bilingual members to volunteer their time to this unending work, we are asking that members help us in recruiting translation services. If a member(s) wishes to come forward to do or share this task, the Executive has recommended an honorarium for any work provided.

**ACCUO Webinar** If you are attending the FCO/ACCUO conference in April, you may come up with some ideas on presenting or co-presenting a webinar later in the year. Keep this in mind when meeting with colleagues. Often a session will spark a conversation that can lead into a webinar for members across Canada.

**ACCUO Members' Biography Resource** This new resource will allow you to provide updated information about your background and expertise annually. This resource will be on the ACCUO website as one document. In order to meet and greet your fellow ACCUO colleagues, please provide the following biographical information: Picture; Name, Ombuds Institution (Time Period and Previous HE Institutions) or other position if not ombudsing; Relevant Higher Education Credentials/Certificates; Job Profile and Expertise (range of work experience); Current Accomplishments, including role/contributions to ACCUO and other Ombuds organizations; Specialization in Ombuds (Teaching, Coaching, Mediation, etc.) Personal Approach to Ombudsing in HE; Recent Awards/Recognition/Presentations; Contact Address and/or ombuds website (300 words maximum: Calibri 11) Please send this information to: Natalie Sharpe at [natalie.sharpe@ualberta.ca](mailto:natalie.sharpe@ualberta.ca)

**Creative Learning Videos** McKenna Lang, Faculty Ombudsperson at Seattle University, is a frequent presenter at CalCaucus conferences in Asilomar (Pacific Grove, California). In her "Master Trees Theatre" videos, Lang talks about difficult situations, using "gentleness, humour and then good practices" to making processes such as mediation more accessible. McKenna Lang credits ACCUO colleagues and her Canadian education for inspiring her work as an ombuds and welcomes ACCUO members to review her materials and provide commentary, if they wish; watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C--mu07uhQw>

**ACCUO Membership Update HEC Montreal** Pascale Legault is the new ombudsman, replacing Robert Bisailon who retired in late 2018.

## **SAVE THE DATE! CONFERENCES 2019**

**The European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE)**'s 15<sup>th</sup> ENOHE conference will be hosted by the University of Léon in Léon, Spain from June 26 – 28, 2019. A pre-conference workshop (with a fee) on analysis of a case study will be led by Jean Grier (University of Edinburgh, Scotland) <http://www.enohe.net/>

**The United States Ombudsman Association (USOA)** has set its 40<sup>th</sup> annual conference date for September 2019 (Pre-conference: September 16 - 17; Conference: September 18 – 20 in Honolulu, Hawaii, where it will be celebrating the opening of the first classical ombudsman in the US, the Hawaii Ombudsman. Check <http://www.usombudsman.org/USOA-events/annual-conference> for regular updates.

**Honouring our ACCUO Leaders** As promised, in this Bulletin, we proudly honour two great leaders in ACCUO and FCO, Lucie Allaire and Nora Farrell. Their message to ACCUO colleagues show the importance of our strong ties and support for each other, regionally, nationally and internationally.



**Lucie Allaire, Past-President ACCUO,  
retiring from ombudsing in Higher  
Education in Canada**

“An unexpected opportunity knocked on my door in 2010 just after I left the Federal Public Service. Well, it didn’t actually knock but it presented itself and led me to a second career in the fascinating world of Ombudspersons.

I spent the first 35 years of my active professional life in different roles in a number of federal departments, mostly in human resources management, but towards the end of my career I moved into the field of Conflict Resolution. Always one to enjoy starting up new projects, I was asked to start an Informal Conflict Management System as Revenue Canada was going through the process of becoming an agency and setting up its new human resources management framework. It was committed to doing things better and one of its signature initiatives was to set up one of its first Informal Conflict Management Systems (ICMS) for all employees and to establish a third-party arbitration process. I was honoured to be tasked with creating and leading this initiative. While I had been involved in the resolution of workplace conflicts as a human resource professional, I had not been trained in mediation or alternative dispute resolution methods. The first thing I did was to recruit some very talented and dedicated people and enroll in the Graduate Certificate program in Conflict Resolution at Carleton University. A whole new world opened up for me and for the next four years, I led this program.

We were just a few senior managers interested and involved in ADR at the time, but one could tell that the positive experiences were making their way and more and more departments were showing interest. The Armed Forces and the Department of National Defense was one such department, and I was approached to take on the project to establish their ADR program for the military and civilian personnel, over 60,000 personnel in Canada and abroad. During my tenure in this position, I was also involved in new legislation to make it mandatory for all federal departments to have an ICMS in place. During that period, I was one of the

founding members and leader of the Interdepartmental Network of ICMS practitioners in the federal government.

When I left the Public Service, I consulted for a few months, taught mediation and negotiation at St. Paul University as well as Harassment prevention training in different departments, until I saw an ad for the position of Ombudsman at the University of Ottawa. It was a new position for the University and I was curious. I threw my name in the competition and was eventually selected to set up and open the first Ombudsman office for the University. I consider this opportunity as a wonderful gift for me.

I immediately turned to experienced people in the field for guidance. There are many people who have been helpful, but I would like to especially thank Jim Kennelly (Carleton University), George Cole (Algonquin College), Nora Farrell (Ryerson University) Nancy Chamberlain (formerly from Université de Laval) and Muriel Binette (UQAM) whom I frequently consulted and who have generously given me time and advice.

I was also fortunate to take some initial training with the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), and some training in investigation techniques as well. Participation in ACCUO forums was of immense value and offered me the essential connections to other ombudspersons. Our work can often feel a bit lonely, and I think it is essential that that we nurture our relationships. I would never have been able to discharge my duties had I not had access to so many of you for advice and sometimes just to listen.

I have learned so much in the last nine years as an Ombudsman. I feel quite proud to belong to our group and to have provided valuable services to students and to university officials as well. I think we offer a perspective that few others can provide in our institutions; we look at problems and issues horizontally, across the institution. This is very valuable because it can significantly help our institutions better understand the source of the problems and find more lasting solutions.

Because I was opening a new office, I was aware that I was creating precedents and I was very careful at the outset to establish good practices and processes based on our fundamental principles: Independence, Impartiality, Confidentiality, and Accessibility. Every decision I made, every position I took and every argument I made was filtered through the lens of these principles. Not coming from the academic world was a challenge at the beginning and the need to be very careful in establishing my credibility was paramount for me in the early years. I felt it was important to approach my work with sound and rigorous application of my mandate and with respect for the institution as well. I learned how to influence different types of decision makers, the value of building the relationships while staying true to your role and your principles. I do hope I have made a good difference. Often I heard people who came to my office, mostly students, say that it was the first time someone took the time to listen to them.

On a personal level, this journey into the world of ombudspersons has been really wonderful. I thoroughly enjoyed walking into the office every day, talking to all sorts of different people, and most rewarding of all, helping people resolve problems or conflicts, big and small. I loved meeting and working with other ombudspersons across the country on common issues. I have always felt that I should contribute my time to our association to promote our role in universities and to support our members. I honestly do not think I would have been able to discharge my mandate without ACCUO and its members. I do hope that it will continue to exist and thrive to provide support to its members. Thank you all and the very best!! It's been a wonderful ride with you.



**Nora Farrell, Past-President Forum of Canadian Ombudsman, retiring Higher Education ombudsperson**

My lengthy career as an Ombudsperson, by some standards and only a good start in comparison to other Ombuds' longevity in their roles, began accidentally. Prior to being immersed in the Ombuds' world, I had been very happily employed in the area of providing services for disadvantaged children and youth and their families for about 15 years. I had the good fortune to live and work in Calgary and Kelowna with local Boys and Girls Clubs and then to travel across Canada with Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. I spent a few very instrumental years with the Children's Aid Society of Toronto as I had been inspired by Marion Wright Edelman, the long-time advocate for children, who said: "The future that we hold in trust for our own children will be shaped by our fairness to other people's children." Then a good friend who was a human resources consultant called me to say: "I have found the perfect job for you." This perfect job was as an Assistant Director in the area of Labour, Health and Education for the Ombudsman of Ontario. While this was my first encounter with the term of 'ombudsman' I was drawn to the principles of ombuds work immediately. Having had no prior Ombuds' experience, I was delighted to learn that I had been selected to join the staff of the provincial ombudsman's office and soon found my natural habitat in the 'fairness' community. I also loved this role for the breadth and depth of subject matter which came to the attention of my specialized team as it was of great interest to me both personally and professionally. As time went on I became involved with all of the subject areas that fall under the ambit of the Ombudsman for Ontario. The variety of issues that could come across the desk of an Ombudsman Ontario staff person never ceased to amaze me: from the rightful ownership of underground mineral rights to access to air rights to resistance to protecting provincially significant wetlands to private colleges' unusual administrative practices to the authenticity of truck drivers' medical documentation, etc. etc., It was fascinating to be exposed to the wide variety of services that are delivered or overseen by a provincial government in a province which has a huge population and immense geographic and demographic diversity.

I then found myself in the position of assisting with the creation of two new Ombuds offices: one for a private sector company that dealt with employee health and assistance plans and then the Canadian Franchise Association and then the International Franchise Association. For an information junkie these roles provided yet another opportunity to learn about all manner of subjects and issues which had I not had the good fortune to work in these areas, would never have come to my attention in any kind of meaningful way.

Once again due to the kindness of a friend, I was advised on the last day to submit an application for the position of Ombudsperson at Ryerson University that such a position was available. I was very much enamored of the academic environment and once again tried my luck. I was very fortunate to be hired to serve as the Ombudsperson for Ryerson University and to my great surprise, ended up spending more than 18 years in this role. My original intention was to serve in this role for a few years as my first contract was for a three-year term. Five years and then ten years flew by and the rest is history. While I have filled the same role at the same entity for a very long period of time, there has never been a dull moment. As Ryerson University as an educational institution, along with its student body, has changed very dramatically over the time that I have been lucky enough to serve as the Ombudsperson, I have never had an uneventful day at the Office. While the challenges have been numerous they have all been worthwhile as there are very few roles that provide for such a diversity of experience and for the opportunity to assist with the resolution of individual concerns while identifying and addressing systemic and system-wide issues.

In the University's response to my 2017/2018 annual report, a note of thanks was included which said:

A Note of Thanks

*In conclusion, because this is your last annual report, the University would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the entire Ryerson community – staff, faculty and students – to express the deep appreciation we feel for what you have been able to accomplish during the time you have spent in this key position.*

*Since 2000, as Ryerson's Ombudsperson, you have done much to shape exactly how the Office of the Ombudsperson functions within the University. In addressing both individual student concerns and systemic issues of fairness, you have shown meticulous care in maintaining the Office's independence from the University's day to day workings. At the same time, you have fostered a close working relationship with a wide range of constituencies across campus. This has required a rare blend of traits: empathy and tenacity in your role as advocate for fairness, and clear-sightedness and discretion in your dealings with University personnel.*

*You leave your position having created positive change for Ryerson students through your recommendations, while also making Ryerson's Office of the Ombudsperson a model for comparable offices throughout the province and country. These achievements, coupled with the gratitude you have gained from community members from all parts of the University, are a fitting testament to the unerring commitment and skill you have shown in this complex role over the past 18 years.*

One of the key reasons why I continued to pursue this work has been the many opportunities for personal and professional growth which have been available to me. In particular, ACCUO members have played a key role in

stimulating my thinking about how to best fulfill the role of an Ombuds. In addition, I feel very proud to be part of a group that has developed excellent resources, Standards of Practice and stimulating conferences and webinars all of which have supported the importance of all Ombuds practitioners having an excellent understanding of the theory underlying Ombuds-work and becoming increasingly skilled in the use of a wide range of dispute resolution techniques; in analyzing trends and making effective recommendations.

As a result of fulfilling various roles within the public, private and not-for-profit sectors and observing how easy it is for 'fairness' to be set aside either deliberately or unwittingly or simply to solve a problem as quickly as possible, it became readily apparent why an independent specialist in fairness, a.k.a. the position of Ombuds, is an essential aspect of democratic governance and administration of any organization. Similarly, it has been very inspiring to encounter so many educators, staff and students who care as much about fairness as we Ombuds do. How lucky I have been to fall into such an interesting and satisfying career and to have known such a stellar group of Ombuds professionals.