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Ombuds Office Annual Report 2003 - 2004

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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OMBUDS OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT 2003-2004

The ombudsperson handled 16 cases during the 2003-2004 calendar year.

Student based complaints: For eight cases the complainant was either a graduate or undergraduate student or the parent of a student. Half of these conflicts involved claims of academic dishonesty, disagreements over grades or, simply, advisor/advisee relationship conflict. The other student based cases were tied to specific episodes, involving conflict with WPI support staff/services or people in the neighboring WPI community. The ombudsperson provided listening, reality checks and most often coaching and rehearsing the complainant in effective ways to interact and follow up with the individual(s) where conflict exists. One case involved providing a series of anger management counseling sessions.

Faculty/Staff based complaints: For 8 cases, the complainant was either an individual faculty or staff member. Complaints were made over (1) perceived pay inequities, (2) perceived inequities in health care insurance options and (3) situations involving emotional abuse from a co-worker or supervisor. Most often the ombuds service involved listening and coaching and then, less frequently, mediation sessions between the parties in conflict. One case involved a group of complainants regarding the handling of an organizational crisis at WPI; the ombuds office was utilized as a communication channel to provide upward feedback to the administration to impact future policy and procedures for crisis management.