

University creates ombuds officer position

By Chris Bouneff
Emerald Associate Editor

The University will hire a tenured faculty member as a part-time ombuds officer to assist faculty, staff and students through administrative red tape when filing a complaint.

University President Myles Brand, in an April 4 memo to faculty, asked for applications from those instructors interested in acting as an advocate for individuals who feel they have been sexually harassed or discriminated against.

The ombuds officer would be part of the president's office staff and would work with formal and informal complaints, Brand said Thursday.

Brand said a number of campus groups had complained because the University lacked an advocate position to help faculty and staff weed through administrative channels.

"This is sort of a carry over from late last year when a number of groups ... (said they) wanted some ability to deal directly with University policies and procedures," he said.

James O'Fallon, Faculty Advisory Council chairman, said the position was needed to ease confusion over the Office of Affirmative Action's role when complaints are filed.

The affirmative action office is an investigatory body and not an advocate for individuals who file complaints, O'Fallon said.

O'Fallon said other factors besides the lack of an advocate for faculty and staff led to the creation of the ombuds position.

"The lack of a trustworthy person one could go to with a harassment complaint was a major motivation for this," he said.

The person appointed to the position will work outside normal administrative authority to negotiate informal agreements and advise individuals on formal procedures, according to the memo.

"There are a lot of things that come up that are in the gray areas where informal negotiation is needed," Brand said.

Brand was unclear about where the money to pay for the position would come from, but he said the need was important enough to justify the extra expense.

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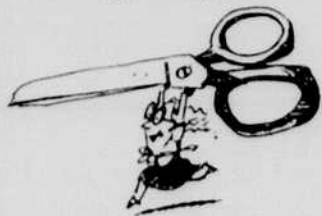
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By GARY LARSON



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