Student Advocacy Annual Report

2009-2010

Contents

Mission 2
Introduction 2
Contacts 2
Demographics..... 2
Issues... 3
Resolution of Issues..... 5
Meetings and Hearings 6
Referrals..... 6
Educational Activities 7
Academic Integrity Week..... 7
Programs and Projects 7
Research and Scholarly Activities. 8
Staff..... 8
Future Plans..... 9
Glossary of Terms..... 9

Mission

The mission of the Student Advocacy office is to ensure that students are treated fairly in their dealings with the University. The Student Advocacy office is dedicated to educating the University community concerning student rights and responsibilities and assisting students in the resolution of conflicts arising from actions or decisions taken by the University.

While serving the University, Student Advocates maintain a student focus by providing information, investigating complaints, resolving conflict through alternative and formal systems, representing students at hearings, and reviewing policies and recommending change.

Introduction

This report summarizes the activities of the Student Advocacy office for the time period from September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010.

Contacts

In 2009-2010, the Student Advocacy office received a total of 1985 requests for assistance ("office contacts"). Assistance was requested by students, staff, and Faculty (see Table 1 for a breakdown of the types of contacts received).

Table 1: Office Contacts	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010
Individual Student Cases	976	994
Carried Forward	39	18
General Student Contacts	743	862
Total Student Contacts	1758	1874
Faculty / Staff Consults	135	108
Issue Cases	n/a	3
Total Office Contacts	**1893**	**1985**

Individual student cases represent students who had a case file opened and an advocate assist them with resolution of their issue. We had an increase in this number for the current reporting year. In 2009-10, 23 of these students were part of group cases. There were a total of 7 group cases in this reporting year. These are included in the total 994. Each year, there are some cases that "carry forward" into the next reporting year. This could happen for a few reasons; (a) the matter is complex, and requires a significant amount of time to resolve that extends beyond the reporting year timeframe, or (b) a student contacts the office toward the end of the reporting year. Only 18 cases were carried forward, which represents a decrease from the previous reporting year.

We also had students make general contacts or inquiries to the office (862). Within this category, there are different types of contacts; (a) general inquiries to the front desk (419); (b) inquiries that may later be opened as a case ("Potential cases" - 222); (c) inquiries via on-line chat services (66); and no show/cancellation for appointments with an advocate (155).

Our office often receives contacts from staff or faculty on campus seeking advice on how to deal with various student issues they encounter. Although we had a slight decrease in the number of faculty/staff contacts, we still have a relatively large number of contacts in this area.

Finally, we define "issue cases" for the purpose of this table to include matters that are brought to the attention of our office, which may involve a large number of students. In these instances, individual case files are not opened for all students, but we count this as one 'contact' with our office. An example may be a problem that occurs during a final exam that may potentially affect all students who were writing that particular exam. In previous reporting years we did not define the "issues" category in this way, therefore, direct number comparisons are not possible between reporting years.

Demographics

The statistics for this section are based on "individual student cases" (see Table 1) as well as those students who scheduled an appointment with an advocate but did not attend the appointment.

Of the 1149 students (994 individual case files and 155 no shows/cancellations) who contacted the office and scheduled an appointment with an advocate in the 2009-2010 year, 46% were male and 54% were female. This is comparable to the previous reporting year.

When a student contacts the office to schedule an appointment with an advocate, they are asked to self-identify on our intake form whether or not they are an international student. This is optional; however in some cases, this information is gleaned from the student during a meeting. In 2009-2010, a total of 212 (18%) students who contacted our office to schedule an appointment with an advocate were identified as international students. This is slightly less than the previous reporting year. It is important to note that Student Advocacy did not verify the information provided by the student regarding their international status.

We also recorded data on students' Faculties of registration (at the time of intake with our office). Most students were enrolled in University 1 (25%), followed by Science (20%), Arts (13%) and Graduate Studies (8%). This distribution is consistent with our data from previous reporting years. The remaining 34% of student cases were spread across the other Faculties and Schools at U of M.

Issues

In 2009-2010, the advocates assisted students with a total of 1113 issues. Note that these statistics are different than the "issue cases" contained in Table 1. These "issues" are based on the matters that advocates assisted students with through managing a case file. The number of "issues" is different than the number of individual student contacts (994). This is because some of the 994 students presented with more than one issue over the course of the reporting year. The number of student issues is higher compared the previous year (1098 issues in 2008-2009).

The amount of time the advocates spend assisting students with issues continues to increase. For example, an advocate may have a lower number of active student case files at any given time, but often the nature of the issue(s) requires significantly more hours of work on the part of the advocate. Typically a student advocate's work with a student involves any or all of the following:

- meeting with the student in person or over the phone (each appointment can take up to an hour);
- corresponding with the student via email;
- intensive review of student's draft appeal and letters of request before they are submitted to administrators or committees;
- researching policies and procedures relevant to a student's case;
- making contacts with other staff and faculty on the student's behalf;
- preparing with the student for upcoming meetings and/or hearings;
- attending meetings/hearings with the student and administrators/committees; and
- completing follow-up tasks such as further meetings and communication with the student.

There are various factors which determine whether a particular case will require a significant amount of time on the part of the advocate. These factors include the nature of the student's program (e.g., graduate studies or professional program); or the impact of the decision on the student (e.g., withdrawal from a program). Other times it may be because a student's response to the issue requires more frequent meetings and phone calls with the advocate. This may include situations which are stressful for the student and in some rare cases, a student may demonstrate difficult or disruptive behavior secondarily to their issue(s). Such behavior requires additional time on the part of the advocate to appropriately manage the student's behavior or emotional needs as they also assist the student with their issue(s). In most cases this "management" takes the form of one-on-one education about student responsibilities, and referrals to other supports (Student Counselling and Career Centre, for example).

Our office continues to implement various innovative strategies to provide more rapid and efficient services for some of the most common issues we see. Specific strategies for 2009-10 will be discussed later in this report (see "Programs and Projects" section). These strategies allow students with certain issues to immediately begin working independently. In most situations this allows students to move the process forward as they wait to meet with an advocate (which during busy times of the year, can take up to 10 working days). In other situations students can independently find resolution via the strategies mentioned above, and can later book an appointment with an advocate if/when they require further assistance.

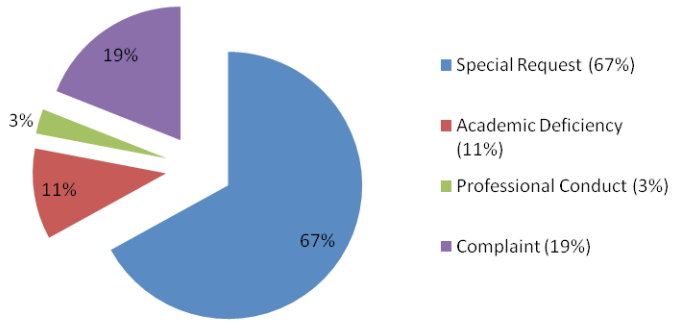
Types of Issues

The majority of the 1113 student issues documented during the past reporting year can be categorized as "academic" (68%), followed by "discipline" (18%), "administrative" (11%), "admission" (2%) and "equity" (1%). This distribution across categories changed slightly from the previous reporting year, with fewer issues in the 'academic' category, and more issues in the 'discipline' and 'administrative' categories.

Academic

The "academic" category is divided into sub-categories of issues. Figure 1 shows how the sub-categories comprise the overall number of academic issues. The sub-category division is consistent with that in the previous reporting year.

Figure 1: Academic Student Issues 2009-2010



The first and largest sub-category of academic issues is special requests (67%). These are issues in which a student needs to make a special request for an academic concession, or a waiver to an existing rule or regulation. Examples of such requests include:

» authorized withdrawals or retroactive voluntary withdrawals from courses;
» deferred tests or examinations;
» extensions on coursework; or
» leaves of absence from an academic program.

These types of requests are normally based on extenuating circumstances such as medical, personal, procedural, or compassionate grounds. Requests made on such grounds typically require some formal supporting documentation from a professional that is submitted by the student (in addition to a formal request letter) to an administrator. Other requests, which may not require supporting documentation include the waiver of requirements, transfer of credit, or letters of permission to take courses at another institution. The majority of special requests in 2009-10 were for authorized withdrawals and deferred exams. This is consistent with the data from the previous reporting year.

The next sub-category of academic issues is complaints (19%). These are issues where the student brings forward a concern, a complaint, or where they seek clarification about a policy or rule. This may include a dispute about a grade, concerns about a course syllabus, or a conflict with an advisor (e.g., graduate students) or professor. Appeals of certain academic decisions such as a grade on a thesis or comprehensive exam would also fall under this category. As with the previous reporting year, the majority of complaint issues were appeals of term-work grades or final grades.

The third sub-category of academic issues is academic deficiency (11%). This category is defined based on situations where students are not meeting minimum academic performance requirements in their programs. This includes students seeking advice or submitting appeals regarding academic probation or suspension, requirement to withdraw, or starting a program afresh. The majority of academic deficiency issues in 2009-2010 were academic suspensions and requirement to withdraw from the program.

The final sub-category of academic issues is professional conduct (3%). It is important to note that this type of conduct, unlike student discipline matters, occur in the context of an academic program and are handled under academic policies (i.e., professional unsuitability or debarment policies). This category commonly includes practicum, clinical, or field placement issues, and applies mainly to students in programs with clinical or practical components, such as Pharmacy, Nursing, Education, or Social Work.

Discipline

For reporting purposes, we divide the discipline issues into two categories. The first is ***academic*** discipline, which refers to issues of academic dishonesty. Table 2 presents the numbers of issues according to the main types of academic dishonesty, and compares the numbers to the previous reporting year. There was an increase in the overall number of academic discipline issues, mainly in the categories of "cheating" (e.g, contravention of test or exam regulations) and "plagiarism". However, there were decreases in the number of students seen for "inappropriate collaboration" and use of "unauthorized material" over last year.

Table 2: Academic Discipline	**2008 - 2009**	**2009 - 2010**
Cheating	26	57
Plagiarism	62	84
Inappropriate Collaboration	43	23
Unauthorized Materials	21	12
False Admissions Information	2	3
False Documentation	4	2
Academic Fraud	1	2
Total	**159**	**183**

The second category of student discipline is categorized as ***non-academic***. This category refers to student behavior outside of academic issues. As noted in Table 3, there was a slight decrease in the number of non-academic discipline issues seen by our office compared to the previous year. The category "other" non-academic discipline included issues such as fraud related to non-academic matters or accessing a building without authorization.

Table 3: Non-Academic Discipline	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010
Inappropriate or disruptive behaviour	11	9
Inappropriate computer use	1	0
Residence discipline	4	6
Other	5	2
Total	**21**	**17**

Beyond the direct service to students who make contact regarding non-academic discipline issues, our office assists the University community more broadly with such cases. Independent of the issues in Table 3, the Director/Acting Director consulted with U of M staff or faculty regarding nine inappropriate/disruptive student issues.

Administrative

The issues in this category represent areas that are handled by an administrative office (e.g. Registrar's Office or Financial Services). Issues include tuition fee appeals or transcript notation removals. It can also include administrative issues related to graduation or matters normally outside the jurisdiction of the University, such as student visas or student loans. This category comprised 11% of all issues in 2009-2010.

Admission

Admission issues comprised the same percentage of overall issues as in the previous year, 2% of our total caseload. These mainly involved situations where students appealed a denied admissions decision from a prospective faculty/program.

Equity

During the 2009-2010 reporting year, 12 (or 1% of all issues) were categorized as "equity". These cases involved a range of concerns including human rights complaints, personal harassment complaints, and sexual harassment complaints.

Most of the equity cases were brought forward by students who had complaints about the behavior of another student or a staff person (instructor, administrator etc.) on campus. The majority of those cases related to personal harassment. In one case a student came to our office because an accusation (sexual harassment) had been brought against them. Generally, the student advocates provided information and advised students regarding their rights and responsibilities under policies such the Respectful Work and Learning Environment (RWLE). Most students who received our assistance were referred to Equity Services (now the Office of Human Rights and Equity) for further support. Students who went on to work with Equity Services sometimes continued to use our services in tandem as they resolved their concern.

Resolution of Issues

One goal of the Student Advocacy office is to resolve matters at the lowest level possible (i.e., seeking rapid and informal resolution, and involving those people most closely connected to the issue). Table 4 provides the details of issue resolution patterns, which are comparable to the previous year.

In 2009-2010, the majority of issues (71%) were resolved informally. Of those resolved informally, most students were given general advice and information by the advocate. The advocates made requests on behalf of students or mediated a concern in nearly one-third of these cases. When students are given information or advice, there is less work involved on the part of the advocate, whereas if the advocate needs to mediate or make a request on behalf of a student, more time is involved. As previously noted, there is a significant trend of increased amounts of work and time the advocates spend on student cases.

Formally resolved issues comprised 29% of the total number of issues in 2009-2010. This is slightly less than in the previous year. Within this category of resolution, we further divide the resolution patters based on whether the request/appeal was "granted", "denied", or "modified". In addition, cases that had not come to resolution by the end of the reporting year are closed as "pending" (refer to Table 4 for sub-categories of formal resolution patterns). As with the trend of last year, most of the formal resolutions resulted in the students' requests or appeals being granted. Some resulted in denials and others resulted in modified resolutions. We consider a resolution to be 'modified' when a compromise or alternative outcome was reached between what the student was asking for, and what the faculty granted the student. An example of this would be where a student was requesting a Authorized Withdrawals (AW) but was instead granted retroactive Voluntary Withdrawals (i.e., there was not sufficient documentation or grounds for an AW, but the circumstances warranted an academic concession). In 3% of the formally-resolved issues, the final decision was not yet made as of the end of the reporting year.

Table 4: Resolution of Issues	2008-2009	2009-2010
Informal	67%	71%
Formal	32%	29%
Granted	64%	58%
Modified	9%	11%
Denied	21%	28%
Decision Pending	5%	3%
	100%	**100%**

Meetings and Hearings

In 2009-2010, advocates attended a total of 197 meetings. This number includes both academic and discipline meetings. This is comparable to the total number of meetings attended in the previous year (195). We define meetings as interactions with decision makers which are typically the first level of contact for the student, and relatively informal. The advocates attended a total of 104 hearings. This includes both academic and discipline hearings that usually involved a committee and formalized procedures at a second or third level of appeal (e.g., Faculty or Senate level). The number of hearings represents a decrease from the previous year (129).

In general, and as seen in our data from previous reporting years, the numbers of meetings and hearings for both discipline and academic matters tend to follow administrative and teaching 'cycles' within the University. Institutional activities and timetables such as application, registration, holidays, examination, assessment and admissions all strongly correlate with the trends in our office's attendance and involvement at meetings and hearings.

Figure 2 displays the trends for academic meetings and hearings in 2009-2010. As expected, academic meetings take place less often than academic hearings.

Figure 2: Academic Meetings and Hearings for 2009-2010

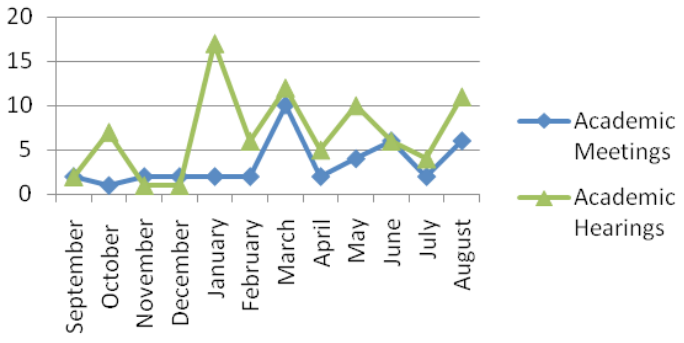
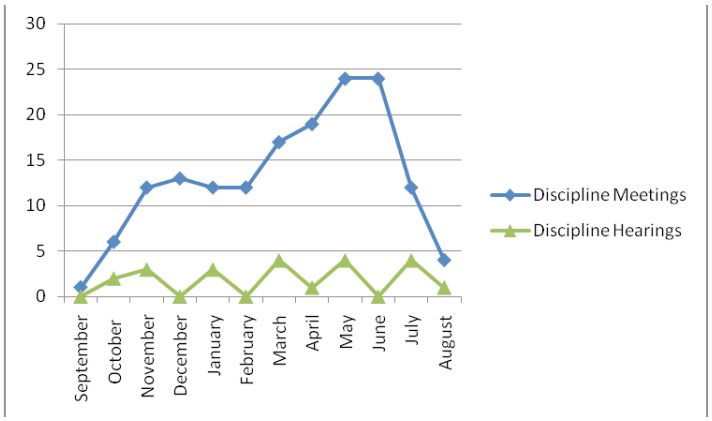


Figure 3 displays the trends for discipline meetings and hearings for 2009-2010. The general trend of discipline meetings and hearings remained the same from the previous reporting year; there are usually more discipline meetings than hearings. A discipline meeting would normally be the first-level of an investigation of a discipline matter. A discipline hearing takes place if a student appeals a decision made by a lower administrative level. Having more issues resolved in a meeting rather than by a hearing, is consistent with our office's approach of resolving matters at a lower level if possible.

The advocates attended twice as many discipline hearings in this reporting year (22), than in the last (11). The timing of discipline hearings was consistent with trends from previous reporting years.

Figure 3: Discipline Meetings and Hearings for 2009-2010



Referrals

Approximately 66% of the contacts made by students who scheduled an appointment with an advocate were referred to us from another on-campus office or staff person. This is comparable to the previous year. Half of all referrals to our office came from a Faculty or School. The next most common referral source was other Student Affairs offices (22%

of all referrals), followed by academic departments (9%). The other two main referral sources were friends and family (8%), and from our own outreach efforts (5%). Student Advocacy outreach includes workshops and orientations, and our website. This composition is similar to that of the previous reporting year.

Educational Activities

The staff prepared and delivered a total of 51 presentations (workshops, lectures, information booths) to a wide variety of audiences. This number is slightly lower than in the previous year (59). Table 5 provides an itemized breakdown of the types of educational activities completed in 2009-2010.

Members of the University community often contact our office to request presentations on various topics, and in various formats (lectures (36), workshops (12), and information booths (3)). Presentation audiences included U of M students, staff (faculty, administrators, and support staff), and parents of students. In some cases, our office staff prepares and presents material specific to the role of our office. In other instances, our staff worked collaboratively with other U of M departments to prepare more comprehensive workshop programming.

Table 5: Presentation

For Students	**36**
General (e.g., student rights, U of M orientation, Student Advocacy Services)	15
Academic Integrity (e.g., Writing and Citing, Inappropriate Collaboration)	19
Other (e.g., working with your thesis advisor)	2
For Staff (faculty, administrators, support staff)	**14**
General (e.g., student rights, Student Advocacy Services)	4
Academic Integrity (e.g., Student Discipline Bylaw and discipline procedures)	5
Other (e.g., dealing with disruptive students, ROASS policy)	5
For Students' Parents (Parents' Program)	**1**
Total	**51**

Academic Integrity Week: Integrity 13

Academic Integrity Week is an annual event hosted by Student Advocacy that involves a week-long focus on, and promotion of, academic integrity. This year we began two main initiatives. The first was to create a Student Advocacy office Facebook page where information about our office and upcoming events (such as Academic Integrity Week) could be sent out to students using a medium that we know they use regularly. There is also opportunity for discussion about academic integrity related matters on this page. We also recruited student volunteers who could assist us with academic integrity educational outreach in the future (this is discussed in the "Future Plans" section of this report). Furthermore, booths were displayed for students at both the Fort Garry and Bannatyne Campuses to disseminate information about academic integrity.

Programs and Projects

Peers: Students Helping Students (SHS)

Peers: SHS is a program funded jointly between Student Affairs and the University of Manitoba Students' Union. Heather Morris continued as Program Administrator and Chair of the Steering Committee. Jennifer Orr was hired in the student position of Program Coordinator, working in the Peer office and coordinating the student volunteers.

The program had another successful year in 2009-2010. There were 20 volunteers who contributed a significant amount of time toward the program and provided a valuable peer-to-peer support service on campus. Eleven offices and programs on campus provided placement opportunities for the volunteers to apply the communication skills learned in training, and extend the help provided to fellow students.

Academic Integrity in High Schools

This outreach project began in 2007-2008 with funding from the U of M Major Outreach Award program. In the current reporting year, an on-line survey was sent out to high school teachers and administrators in the Winnipeg school divisions. This survey requested feedback on what types of education is already offered in the area of academic integrity, and what additional information or resources would be helpful to further facilitate this education for secondary students. There were 23 responses to this survey and the data will be used to create educational materials for secondary schools. This project continues into the next reporting year.

Strategic Program Development Fund

In 2007-2008, funding was received for *Multimedia Proj-*

ect: Creating Web Resources for Students (jointly with the Learning Assistance Centre). The funds were used to purchase *Articulate* software, laptops, and other hardware. In this reporting year, Student Advocacy staff created on-line tutorials for students. These tutorials (Authorized Withdrawals and Final Grade Appeals) are primarily intended to provide a resource for students to access prior to their appointment with the advocate.

Student Advocacy Satisfaction Survey

The Student Advocacy staff created a survey for students who utilized our office during the year, to assess their satisfaction with the services received. The first round of surveys was sent out in May 2010 to students who contacted the office between January to April 2010. Further circulation of this survey will continue into the next reporting year.

Research and Scholarly Activities

- Brandy Usick and Heather Morris co-instructed two offerings of the online course offered by Centre for Higher Education Research and Development (CHERD) entitled *The Role of Student and Student Needs* (October 2009 and February 2010). This is a required course for the web-based program "Certificate in University and College Administration".
- Heather Morris continued work with Marlene Pomrenke (Student Counselling and Career Centre) on their research project on social workers and careers in Student Affairs. The second phase of this research began in 2009-10 in which social work students were surveyed for their understanding of career opportunities.
- Heather Morris was the Central Representative for the professional organization CAISJA (Canadian Academic Integrity and Student Judicial Affairs), a division of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services. She attended monthly teleconference meetings with the executive and the annual general meeting in June 2010.

Publications and Presentations

- Morris, H. & Pomrenke, M. (2010, June). *Social Work Students 'Shine a Light' on Student Affairs Careers*. Canadian Association of College and University Student Services conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.
- Morris, H., Sharpe, N., & Apps, L. (2010, June). *Examining Different Models for Services on Student Rights and Responsibilities*. Canadian Association of College and University Student Services conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.
- Pomrenke, M. & Morris, H. (Fall 2009). The Fit Between the Profession of Social Work and Student Affairs. *Communique*, 10 (1), p. 26-27.
- Smith, L. M. & Morris, H. (2010, June). *Elements of a Fair Hearing*. Canadian Association of College and University Student Services conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Staff

Valentina Ly continued as a part-time student office assistant for Fall 2009. Jena Colpitts was hired as our summer student for 2010, working mainly at the front desk and helping out with various office projects.

Marcel Peloquin was hired part time as a Junior Student Advocate during the academic year, and worked full time over the summer.

Diana Nguyen was our Peer Advocate and received training from Brian Barth and Angel Therrien. She was hired over the summer as a part time Junior Student Advocate over the summer.

Brandy Usick went on maternity leave as of March 2010. Heather Morris was Acting Director during that time.

Committee Work

Student Advocacy staff are committed to playing an active role in Student Services, Student Affairs and as members on University committees. Staff participation is summarized below:

- Brandy Usick (and subsequently Heather Morris) was involved with Council of Student Affairs (COSA), Faculty of Graduate Studies Guidelines and Policy Committee, OAR's 3 R's Working Group, Student Leadership Committee, and Student Affairs Orientation (Passport to Success).
- Brian Barth continued to be a member of the U of M Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board and began a one year chair position in July 2010. Brian also attended meetings of the Faculty of Graduate Studies Guidelines and Policy Committee. Brandy and Heather also participated on internal selection committees.

Professional Development

Student Advocacy staff are committed to participating in educational opportunities that lead to the development or enhancement of skills, or that provide reflection of our services. The following are highlights from the 2009-2010 reporting year:

- Brian attended a national conference for the Center for Academic Integrity (October 2009) at Washington University in St. Louis, MI.
- Heather attended the Canadian Association of College

and University Student Services (CACUSS) conference at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB (June 2009).

- Brandy completed an on-line course on Open Educational Resources through the Emerging Technologies Certificate Program.
- All staff attended Student Affairs Professional Development day (November 2009).
- All staff attended the annual Student Advocacy and Resource Services Staff Retreat (May 2010).

Staff Outreach

Staff also participated in programs and events for the U of M community, as well as the Winnipeg community, for example, Disability Services Access Awareness Day, United Way Rainbow Auction, Evening of Excellence, Info Days, Parents' Program, University 1 Orientation (Meeter and Greeter), Campus Beautification Day and Sneaker Day.

Future Plans

High School Outreach

Over the next academic year, Student Advocacy will use the feedback received on academic integrity education and programming in secondary schools to create materials to help facilitate this education for students.

Multi-media

Following from our educational mandate, staff will be creating more multi-media tutorials for the website. Two in particular will be in the area of academic integrity. The first will cover the discipline process for students at the university. The second tutorial will be designed as a large, multiple module educational tool on academic integrity. It will cover areas related to academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, exam cheating, inappropriate collaboration, fraud, cheating and technology, and student conduct).

Academic Integrity Ambassadors

Following the recruitment component of Integrity 13, we will be training the student volunteers who applied to this program, to assist us with educational outreach on academic integrity in the 2010-2011 year. These activities include workshops for students, building of website and promotional materials, as well as planning Academic Integrity Week 14 for 2011.

Glossary of Terms

Contacts - students or staff who contact the Student Advocacy office with questions or to arrange an appointment with an advocate.

Issue - a matter in which a student is seeking assistance (e.g., concern, complaint, appeal, etc.). An "issue case" applies when there is an overall issue affecting a large number of students.

Cases - a case file is opened for a student to follow a particular issue/request/appeal.

Group Case - a group of students contact the office with the same issue.

Category - the way in which issues are classified or grouped.

Student Advocacy
519 University Centre
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N2

Tel: 204-474-7423
Fax: 204-474-7567

Email: student_advocacy@umanitoba.ca
umanitoba.ca/student/advocacy

University of Manitoba

STUDENT AFFAIRS
Student Services