

**The Graduate Student Assembly
The University of Texas at Austin**

Resolution: J.R. 15 (S) 5

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In Support of funding a Full Time Student Ombuds

Summary: A resolution in support of the President's office funding a full time, professionally certified ombudsperson for the University Student Ombuds office.

WHEREAS (1) The Graduate Student Assembly is the official voice of the 12,000 graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin. Student Government is the official voice of the students of the University of Texas on student affairs; and,

WHEREAS (2) The mission of the Office of the Student Ombuds is to provide a safe and confidential environment where students can voice concerns related to life at the University¹; and,

WHEREAS (2) The Office of the Student Ombuds served 1,400 students in 2013-2014, including both undergraduate, as well as graduate and professional students; and,

WHEREAS (3) The Office of the Student Ombuds was staffed by only one Graduate Assistant and a graduate student Ombudsperson in 2013-2014 and needed a second Graduate Assistant in 2014-2015 to increase availability of services. The office is overloaded by demand and lacks the assistance of a full-time, professionally certified ombuds-person; and,

WHEREAS (4) Growth in demand for the Office of Student Ombuds has greatly outpaced the growth in staff and services, with Fall 2014 student sessions increasing 77% from the previous Fall semester and 114% from Fall 2012. Direct student contacts have increased 193% since Fall 2012; and,

¹ The Office of the Student Ombuds, Student Services Budget Committee 2013-2014 Report

WHEREAS (5) The number of office outreach events has increased from 6 in Fall 2012 to 29 in Fall 2014; and,

WHEREAS (6) In order to maintain this growth in services and keep quality of services high, the Ombuds office needs a permanent Ombuds position providing services and training for Graduate Assistant ombudspersons “in order to maintain continuity that is being lost each time a new student takes lead of the office”²; and,

WHEREAS (6) Many of our peer institutions, including University of Texas at Austin peer institutions Texas A&M, University of California Los Angeles, and Ohio State University, have created full time student ombuds positions; and,

WHEREAS (7) The International Ombudsman Association now offers a professional certification program for Ombudspersons; and,

WHEREAS (8) The Ombudsperson’s Review Committee recommended the creation of a full time professional student ombudsperson in 2006, and needs have only increased since that time.

THEREFORE,
LET IT BE

RESOLVED (1) That we support the creation of a full time, professionally certified Ombudsperson; and,

BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED (2) That we support the creation of a committee to review the office of the student ombuds budget and make financial recommendations to accommodate this new position; and,

BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED (3) That this resolution be shared with Dr. Soncia Reagins-Lilly, Dean of Students; Dr. Gage Paine, Vice President for Student Affairs; Dr. Gregory Fennes, Provost and President-Select; Dr. Carol Longoria, Office of the President; Dr. Judith Langlois, Dean of the Graduate School; Dr. John Dalton, Associate Dean of the Graduate School; Dr. William Beckner, Chair of the Faculty Council.

²SSBC Final Report 2007-2008. <https://www.utexas.edu/tuition/ssbc/docs/SSBCFinalReport0708.pdf>