

# Ombudsman office: Now it's ombudsmen

By BEVERLY TWITCHELL  
Associate Editor, Faculty News

It's "ombudsmen" now.

Ted Brooks, formerly assistant dean of the School for Advanced Graduate Studies, has joined Ombudsman James Rust as associate ombudsman.

Brooks will retain a half - time appointment, however, as assistant professor of social work, and will continue to teach at least one class every term. Rust, a professor of English, usually teaches one class a year.

With Brooks' background in the graduate office, he will probably handle the graduate student cases which come to the Ombudsman's office, Rust said.

Brooks has an advantage as a new ombudsman that Rust didn't have when he became the University's first ombudsman three years ago — to prepare himself for the job, Brooks has been going through Rust's files of previous cases, thus, he said, getting an idea of the range of problems and of procedures.

Last week Don E. Ensley, a graduate student in geography, was added to the ombudsman staff. Ensley will be assistant to the ombudsman, working with minority students.

Ensley is temporarily located in Room 32 of the Union, with the Counseling and Tutoring Program ( a new program for minority students) which he considers a good location because the program is expected to provide a gathering point for minority students.

Ensley has worked with minority students through the Office of Equal Opportunity at North Carolina Central University, where he received his bachelor's degree. His work there, he said, involved making students "employable" and helping them find jobs. He has been at MSU since March 1970.

Ensley prefers to call himself an "ombudsman counselor." He said he thinks having a black ombudsman will make black and minority students more comfortable about seeking aid through the ombudsman's office. Rust agrees that the addition of a black ombudsman is important because "I know a number of black students haven't come to me because I'm a white man."

In September, 1967, shortly after his appointment, Rust said that he hadn't "the vaguest idea of what to expect from the position," but that he hoped to assist students much as he had been as assistant dean of the College of Arts and Letters.

He speculated at the time that much of what he would be concerned with would

be in the academic area, but said he would hear any student problem.

Three years later he says his views on the position haven't changed very much, except that he places more emphasis on change. He cites as examples his part in establishing the Code of Teaching Responsibility and a change in the tuition system. He recommended both on the basis of complaints he had handled — not only in number, he points out, but in seriousness.

In a July 16, 1970 "Report to the President for the School Year 1969-70," Rust said that the year had been distinguished mainly by more cases: 963 students with 1,019 problems. The previous year he had handled 747 students with 822 problems.

Rust also reported that the problems were more difficult, requiring more investigation and meetings with more people.

"I don't flatter myself that the faculty is going to regard me as a saviour, but the fact remains that in cases involving students and faculty during this past year, 34 percent of the charges against faculty were found totally invalid. In an additional 16 percent there was only very slight validity, really only some degree of misunderstanding between the student and the faculty member," Rust reported.

The two most frequent complaints Rust heard last year centered on instruction (21 percent of the all complaints heard) and fees and tuition (20.6 percent)

Other problems, and their percentages of the total complaints, involved: Registration and admission (12.7 percent), housing (8.7), of a personal nature (8.3), academic requirements (7), University facilities and services (6.6), academic status (4.2), student employment (4), auto use and police (2.5) and academic advice (2.5). Another 1.5 percent of complaints were categorized as "miscellaneous academic."

Colleges with the highest percentages among students seeing the ombudsman last year were: University College (24 percent), social science (20.4 percent), arts and letter (11.2 percent), education (8.4 percent) and natural science (7.1 percent). Colleges with less than 1 percent representation were: Lyman Briggs, human medicine and veterinary medicine.

About two - thirds of the students who saw the ombudsman last year were male.

Seniors comprised 29 percent of those visiting the ombudsman last year. Juniors

represented 22.5 percent of the total, sophomores 18.8 percent, graduate students 14.3 percent and freshmen 9.1 percent. Others seeing the ombudsman included 11 persons who were not students at the time; persons in special programs, alumni and one parent.

In store for the ombudsmen this year: Rust and Brooks said they expect complaints on grades as a ramification of the spring term student strike and the special grading options approved by faculty governing bodies; and both hope to visit dormitories, taking their office to

students who still might not know that the ombudsmen are available. Which brings up a perpetual problem for the Ombudsman — "how to be visible," Rust says, "without encouraging complaining."

The Office of Ombudsman was established in the 1967 Academic Freedom for Students Report and was designed to help students cut red tape in seeking solution to various problems.

Rust is not the first campus ombudsman in the country. But he is, as he puts it, the "oldest surviving" one.



The ombudsmen: From left, James Rust, Theodore Brooks, Don Ensley.

— Photo by Dick Wesley

## Board approves appeal procedure

At its Sept. 17 meeting, the Board of Trustees:

\* Approved an "interim procedure" for hearing grievances brought by any faculty member charged with "willful

assimilated within MSU during the next two years.

\* Accepted some \$4.1 million in gifts and grants, of which \$3.5 is from the federal government sponsored research and education. Federal educational