



**The University of Texas at San Antonio**

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs  
Student Ombudsperson's 2008-2009 Annual Report

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## **I. Introduction**

The 2008-2009 annual report includes the following:

- a description of the role of this position,
- promotion efforts,
- a summary of the individuals served,
- areas of concern, and
- recommendations for change and/or improvement.

## **II. Role of the Student Ombudsperson**

The primary role of the Student Ombudsperson is to assist students who are encountering challenges within the campus community by listening to concerns, providing and clarifying information, identifying and evaluating options, acting as a facilitator or mediator, serving as a referral agent, and making recommendations for change to enhance the mission of the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

The Student Ombudsperson offers confidential services to all students in a welcoming and safe environment and communicates with various representatives and offices to respond to and help resolve concerns in a timely manner. Parents and other individuals are also assisted within Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines in an effort to possibly remedy a particular situation. The Student Ombudsperson reports to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) and can be reached by appointment, email, fax, phone, and mail. Walk-ins are also welcome.

## **III. Promotion**

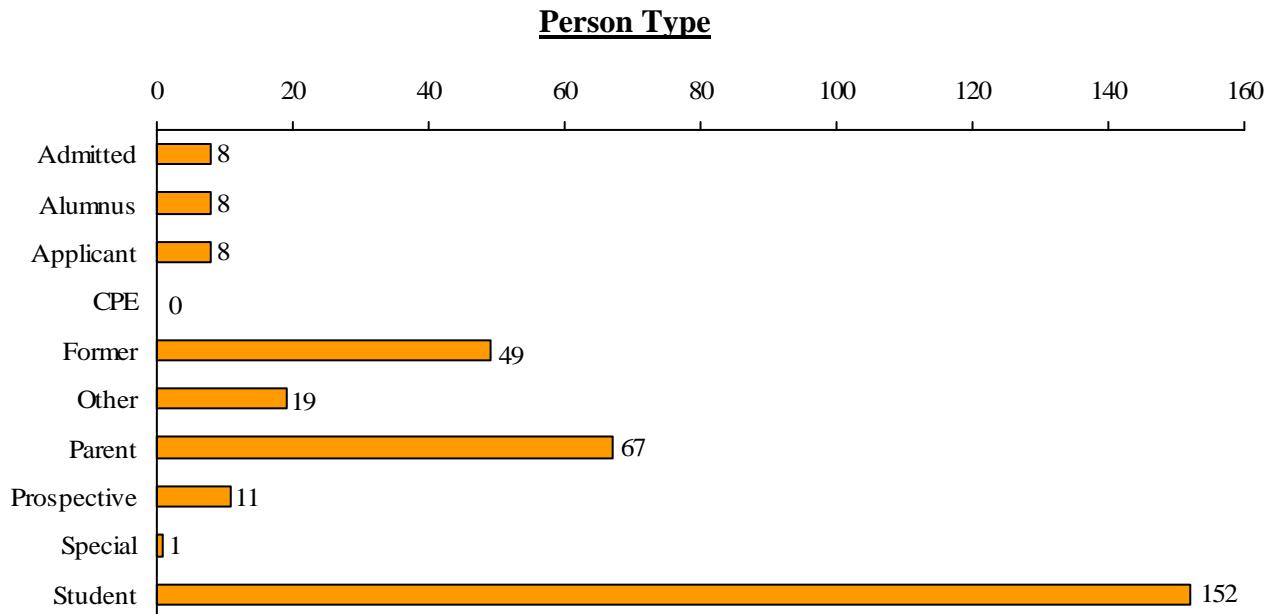
The Student Ombudsperson position was publicized on a welcome slide show at freshmen orientation programs and through presentations with Student Affairs Development staff during family orientation programs. The position was also advertised in the university Family Calendar and Guidebook and discussed at training sessions for new undergraduate advisors. The Student Ombudsperson web page – <http://www.utsa.edu/students/ombudsperson/> and online Information Bulletin also served as sources of information for this position.

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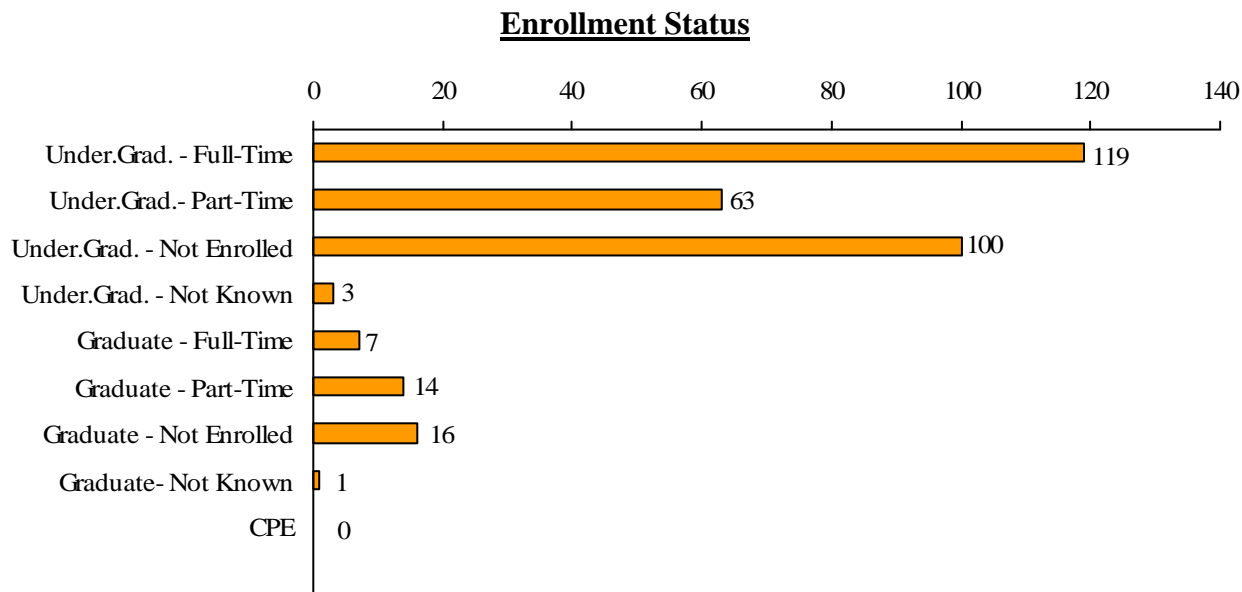
## IV. Statistics



A total of 323 individuals were assisted by the Student Ombudsperson during 2008-2009. These individuals were as follows:

- Admitted Accepted to the university.
- Alumnus Graduated from the university.
- Applicant Applied to the university.
- CPE Enrolled in classes through the Center for Professional Excellence.
- Former Previously attended the university (not currently enrolled).
- Other Third party inquiry (e.g. aunt, uncle, counselor, etc.).
- Parent Inquiry by mother, father, step parent, or legal guardian.
- Prospective Interested in applying to/attending the university.
- Special Non-degree seeking.
- Student Currently enrolled at the university.

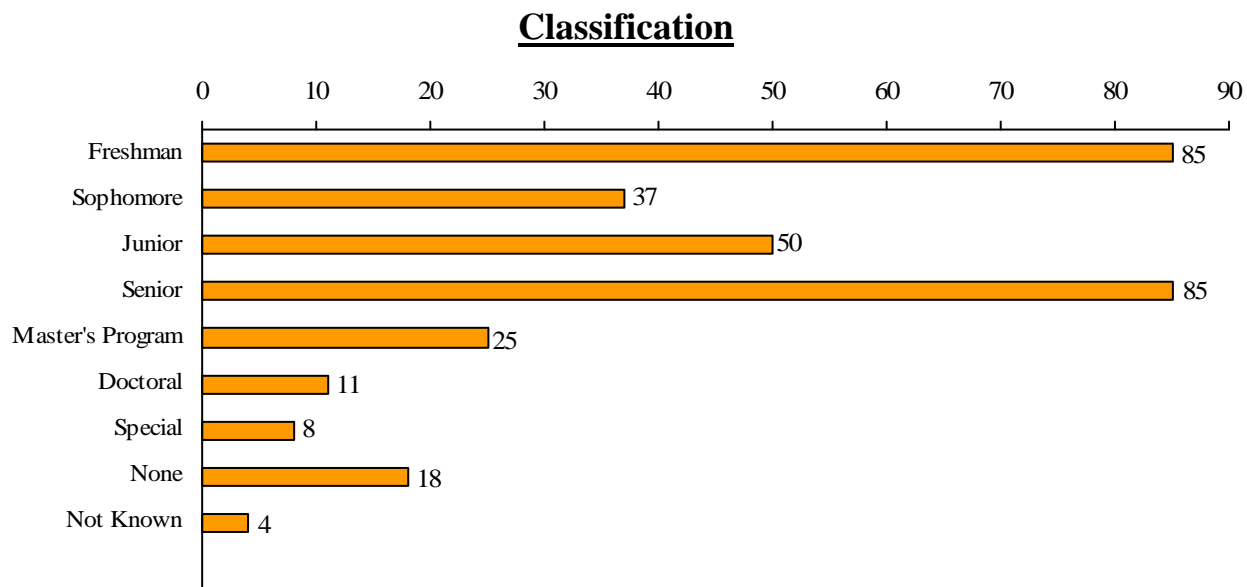
The majority of those assisted were comprised of currently enrolled students (47%), parents (21%) and former students (15%).



Undergraduates constituted 88% of the contacts. Most were categorized as either full-time (37%), not enrolled (31%) and part-time (20%). Enrollment statuses included the following:

- Undergraduate Full-Time                      Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Special student enrolled at least 12 semester credit hours.
- Undergraduate Part-Time                      Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Special student enrolled less than full-time.
- Undergraduate Not Enrolled                      Not currently enrolled.
- Undergraduate Not Known                      Enrollment status not confirmed.
- Graduate Full-Time                              Doctoral, Master's degree, or Special student enrolled at least 9 semester credit hours.
- Graduate Part-Time                              Doctoral, Master's degree, or Special student enrolled less than full-time.
- Graduate Not Enrolled                              Not currently enrolled.
- Graduate Not Known                              Enrollment status not confirmed.
- CPE    Center for Professional Excellence student.

Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, enrollment of the student was checked.

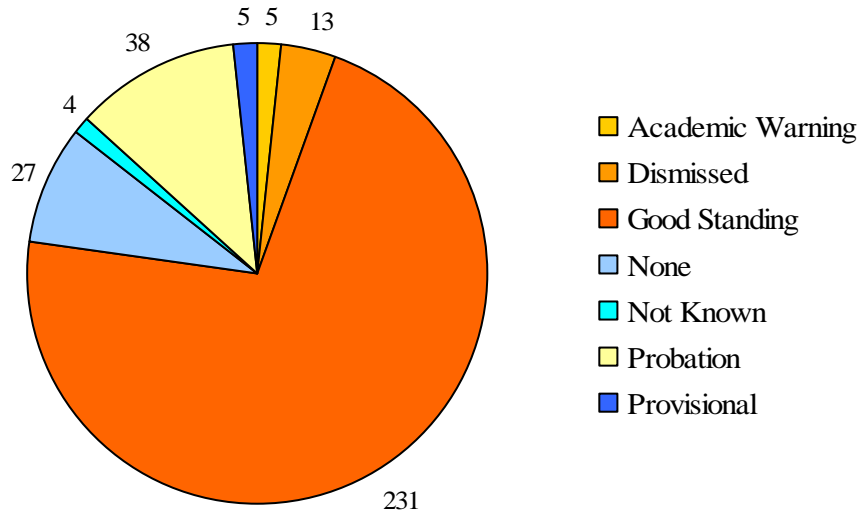


Seniors (26%), freshmen (26%) and juniors (15%) made up the majority of the undergraduate contacts. Classifications included:

- Freshman 0–29 semester credit hours earned.
- Sophomore 30-59 semester credit hours earned.
- Junior 60-89 semester credit hours earned.
- Senior 90+ semester credit hours earned.
- Master's Program Enrolled as a graduate student in a master's degree program.
- Doctoral Enrolled as a graduate student in a doctoral degree program.
- Special Non-degree seeking at the undergraduate or graduate level.
- None Classification not available (e.g. prospective student, new admit, etc.).
- Not Known Classification not confirmed.

Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, classification of the student was checked.

**Academic Status**



While 19% of the students were experiencing academic difficulties, 72% were in good standing with the University. The academic statuses consisted of:

- **Academic Warning** First-time undergraduate, admitted in good standing, who earned between a 1.00 and 1.99 semester grade point average during his/her first semester at UTSA.
- **Dismissed** Undergraduate on probation who earned below a 2.00 semester grade point average or a graduate who earned a grade point average of less than a 2.00 in any term, earned a grade of “F” in any course, or who was on probation and would be placed on probation again under the probation provisions listed below for graduate students.
- **Good Standing** Undergraduate who maintained at least a 2.00 or higher UTSA grade point average or a graduate who maintained at least a 3.00 or higher UTSA grade point average who did not fall into any of the categories which would cause a graduate student to be placed on probation or dismissal.
- **None** Academic status not available (e.g. prospective student, new admit, etc.).
- **Not Known** Academic status not confirmed.

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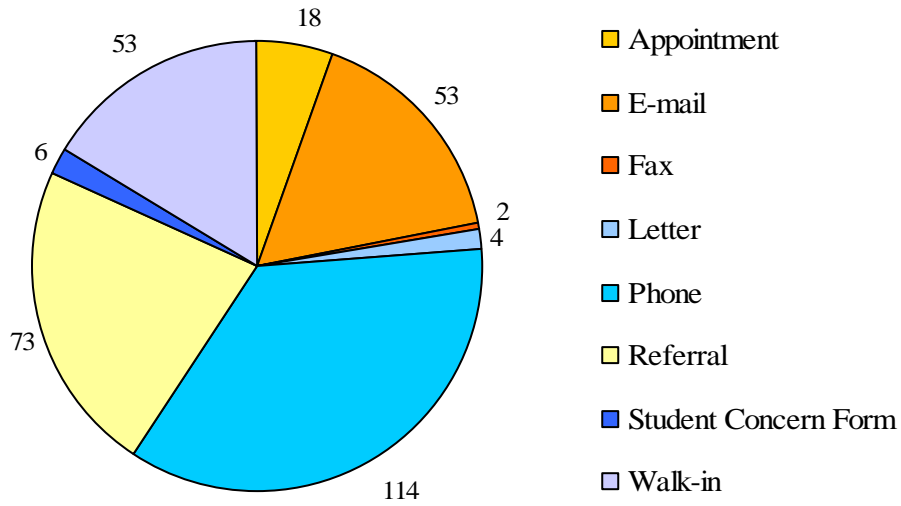
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- Probation Undergraduate in good standing whose overall UTSA grade point average fell below a 2.00 or a graduate who failed to achieve a grade point average of 3.00 in any term at UTSA, or who earned a grade of “D” in any course in a term, also includes undergraduates and graduates admitted on probation and those who have been reinstated following dismissal.
- Provisional Undergraduate admitted as provisional due to deficiencies in entrance scores or high school records.

Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, academic status of the student was checked.

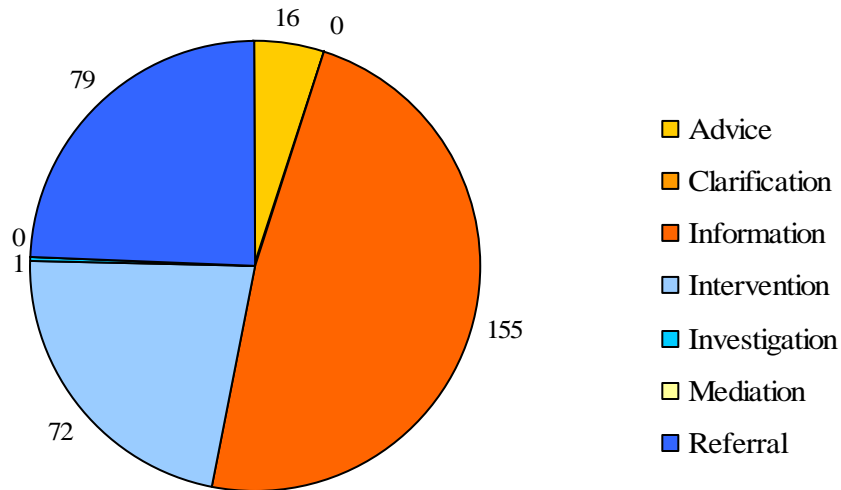
**Contact Type**



Contacts were primarily initiated by phone (35%), followed by referrals (23%), emails (16%) and walk-ins (16%).



**Action Taken**



The action used most often to help those seeking assistance from the Student Ombudsperson was providing information (48%). This was followed by referrals (24%) and intervention (22%). Clarification and mediation were not used as a primary means to address a particular situation.

Note: Some actions included multiple actions. The primary action taken is listed above.

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## V. Areas of Concern

Area of Concern	Total	Area of Concern	Total
Accessibility	7	Fiscal Services	9
Admissions - Undergraduate	33	Grade Grievance	23
Admissions - Graduate	5	Grade Point Average	1
Advising – Undergraduate	12	Grades	3
Advising – Graduate	1	Graduation	4
ASAP	0	Grant	1
Bookstore	2	Health Services	3
CAP Program	0	International Programs	1
Card Office	0	Internship	0
Challenge Exam	0	Library	0
Change of Grade	0	Military Orders	0
Classification Change	0	myUTSA email	1
CLEP	0	Off-Campus Housing	1
Computer Lab	1	On-Campus Housing	15
Core Curriculum	0	Other	60
Course – Attendance	2	Paisano	0
Course – Drop	10	Parking	15
Course – Grading Process	5	Registration	4
Course – Instruction	5	Reinstatement	7
Course – Make-up Exam	1	Repeat Policy	0
Course – Missed Quiz	0	Residency	1
Course – Schedule	17	Safety	3
Course load Reduction	2	Scholarship	2
CPE	0	Student Judicial Affairs	5
Dance Team	0	Student Organization	0
Diploma	1	Study Days	0
Disability Services	2	Testing Services	0
Dissertation	0	Transcript Request	4
Enrollment Verification	0	Texas Success Initiative	1
ExCET/TEExES	0	Tuition	0
FCSA Evaluation	0	University Police	2
Fees	1	University of Texas -Telecampus	0
FERPA	0	Veteran Affairs	2
Field Placement	0	Visa	1
Final Exams	5	WebCT	0
Financial Aid	22	Withdrawal	20
		<b>Grand total</b>	<b>323</b>

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In 2008-2009, areas of concern continued to pertain to the three main operating functions of the university: academic, business and student affairs. Those expressed most often included the category of other, admissions-undergraduate, grade grievances, financial aid and withdrawing from the university. Topics such as course schedules, on-campus housing, parking, advising-undergraduate and course drops were also discussed frequently. Detailed information concerning these areas of concern is outlined below.

## Other

- Questions about meal tax charges, payment deadlines, late fees and cancellation of meal plans.
- Allegations of discrimination, research violations and stalking.
- On-campus employment options and career exploration.
- Communication issues involving departments, instructors and student class groups/teams.
- Difficulty accessing online orientation module.
- Concerns about work environment and notification to student employees about policies and procedures.
- Request for refund of software purchase.
- On-campus injuries (e.g. Campus Recreation Center, Kinesiology course).
- Requests for information and support services (e.g. Ambassador Program, Audit, Compliance and Risk Services, Law School Admission Test (LSAT), Institute for Law and Public Affairs, Summer Law School Preparation Academy, student code of conduct, rental options for motorized scooters, academic coaching, advising, counseling, etc.).
- Concerns about noise levels in the library during final exam period (library was under construction at the time).
- Questions about comprehensive exams, fitness to teach, research and publications and appeal options.
- Inquiries about president's list, dean's list and honor roll designations.
- Campus Recreation work-out dress code.
- Checking on status of tuition rebate and various holds.\*
- Customer service concerns.\*
- Inquiries about making arrangements to close out affairs (e.g. move belongings out of dorm room, return books, etc.) for deceased students and notifications about other extenuating circumstances.\*
- Discussions about various processes, policies and resources for a better connection to and understanding of the university.\*
- Inquiries about tuition and fees, online degree offerings, smoking policy, FERPA, student authorization to release education record information, etc.\*
- Updates and/or corrections to student records (e.g. academic status, repeat indicators, grade point averages, etc.).\*

\* Similar to previous years.

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## Admissions – Undergraduate

- Procedure for inactivating admission.
- Questions about the admissions process for various student types (e.g. freshmen, transfer, international, special and transient).\*
- Status of incomplete files during peak periods; checking if credentials had been received.\*
- Admission hold which prevented registration due to outstanding final high school transcript, dual credit transcript, etc.\*
- Appeal process for those who missed the application deadline or were denied admission.\*
- Questions about academic fresh start.\*

## Grade Grievance

- Attended grade grievance meeting with student, instructor and department chair.
- Inquiries about where to find information on the grade grievance procedure.\*
- Requests for a copy of the Student Academic and Grade Grievance form.\*
- Questions about levels of appeal, status of grievance, time limit on submitting a grievance, change of grades, change of academic status, etc.\*
- Concerns about communicating with instructors.\*

## Financial Aid

- Questions about disbursement of financial aid funds when transitioning from undergraduate to graduate school, direct loan process, emergency loans, release of personal information via email, etc.
- Available funding options for international students.
- Inquiries about award cancellations and reinstating financial aid.
- Eligibility requirements for the Hazelwood educational benefit.
- Understanding awarding, verification, unmet need and whether additional assistance was available.\*
- Options when aggregate loan limits had been reached.\*
- Adjustments to financial aid awards due to audits, changes in enrollment status, graduation, etc.\*
- Availability of work-study jobs; how to find a work-study job.\*
- Inquiries about applying for and receiving financial aid during the summer.\*
- Special circumstance and financial hardship requests.\*
- Status of file and when funds would be disbursed.\*
- Appeal process for those who did not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards or missed the SAP deadline.\*
- Other process issues which involved return of funds due to withdrawal, eligibility (e.g. degree seeking versus non-degree seeking), default on a student loan, etc.\*

\* Similar to previous years.

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## Withdrawal

- Questions about the withdrawal process including where to find the online withdrawal form.\*
- Inquiries about medical and mental health withdrawals.\*
- Status of requests and process for appeals.\*
- Questions about refund periods and deadlines.\*
- Retroactive withdrawal requests due to extenuating circumstances.\*

## Course Schedule

- Difficulty accessing registration system.
- Questions about override permission for registration into various courses, independent study enrollment, etc.
- Courses needed for degree program/graduation were full; lack of/limited course offerings.\*
- Courses dropped due to non-payment, lack of prerequisites or teacher placement, academic dismissal.\*
- Inquiries about registration dates, dropping courses and enrollment status.\*

## On-Campus Housing

- Concerns about lack of hot water.
- Maintenance and security issues.
- Questions about pet fines, cancellation fees, subleasing options and return of deposit.
- Scheduling payment arrangements.\*
- Roommate issues.\*
- Housing hold on account; unable to register.\*

## Parking

- Questions about ordering a permit online via ASAP (Automated Student Access Program).
- Inquiries about disabled student parking.\*
- Parking hold on account; unable to register and/or request transcript.\*
- Questions about permit charges, parking citations, pay stations and immobilization boot on car.\*
- Process for appeals including status of appeals.\*

\* Similar to previous years.

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## Advising – Undergraduate

- Clarification about the six drop policy and the policy on repeating courses.
- Questions about pre-nursing coursework and Coordinated Admission Program (CAP) requirements.
- Concerns about advising experience/information received.
- Core complete, prerequisite and registration inquiries.\*
- Questions about appeal, grievance and petition processes, advising holds, returning after medical withdrawal, etc.\*

## Course Drop

- Process for appealing/adding classes after regular and late registration periods.
- Course inadvertently dropped by department or student.
- Request to have course removed from schedule/record due to mitigating circumstances.
- Questions about drop deadline dates, refund periods and how to drop courses online.\*
- Requests for administrative and/or retroactive drops due to extenuating circumstances.\*
- Courses were cancelled, dropped by departments or the prerequisite checking system.\*

Note: If there were multiple areas of concern, the primary area of concern was tracked.

## **VI. Recommendations**

As follow-up to the 2007-2008 report, the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) 5.9 Class Attendance Policies section was still under the review process. In 2008-2009, a recommendation was submitted to Disability Services to consider creating directional/wayfinding maps for individuals with disabilities. These maps would indicate suggested travel routes for individuals utilizing a manual or motorized wheelchair/scooter on-campus.

\* Similar to previous years.

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## **Abbreviations**

ASAP	Automated Student Access Program
CAP	Coordinated Admissions Program
CLEP	College Level Examination Program
CPE	Center for Professional Excellence
ExCET/TE <sub>x</sub> ES	Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas/Texas Examinations of Educator Standards
FCSA	Foreign Credentials Service of America
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
HOP	Handbook of Operating Procedures
LSAT	Law School Admission Test
SAP	Satisfactory Academic Progress
WebCT	World Wide Web Course Tools