

Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO)
Minutes of the ACCUO Annual General Meeting
November 28, 2024

The 2024 ACCUO Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on November 28, 2024, at 12:00 noon (EST). The meeting was virtual.

Voting Membership present at the meeting:

Firas Ayoub, Julie Boncompain, Stephanie Bolingbroke, Chanelle Bouassali, Martine Conway, Carley Davidson, Marianne Leblond, Tanny Marks, Shawn Malley, Annette O’Hara, Kemi Oke, Shirley Nakata, Edmun Natkunarajah, Kim Nelson, Kathryn Morrissey, Carmela Parzanese, Laura Reid, Angus Shaw, Natalie Sharpe, Jeff Stransky, Emma Thacker (AGM Secretary), Rob Thompson.

Other Membership present at meeting (either institutional or associate)

Meshia Brown, George Cole, Niamh Dower, Cindy Ferencz-Hammond, Amy Fish, Elizabeth Garofalo, Cindy Leonard, Munachi Nwanisobi, Rose Padacz, Jacky Rivas, Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Laurel Wilkie.

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The ACCUO President (Interim), Kemi Oke (York University), welcomed members to the meeting. She invited Laurel Wilkie (University of Alberta) to provide a Land Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Agenda

On motion duly made, seconded, and carried, the AGM agenda for November 28, 2024, was adopted.

3. Report of the President

Kemi presented her President’s Report for 2023-24, highlighting the key activities and challenges faced by the organization over the past year. Despite increased caseloads and vacancies on the Executive Committee, the organization remained committed to strengthening its mission of promoting fairness and accountability in Canadian post-secondary institutions.

During 2023-24, ACCUO had two Executive Committees. The first served from the previous AGM (May 2023) until July 2024, when several resignations occurred. An interim Executive Committee was assembled and managed the organization’s affairs from July 2024 onwards. Membership continued to grow despite administrative challenges, demonstrating the value of a strong Ombuds community.

Members and Committees remained active, regularly communicating via listserv announcements, the FCO/ACCUO conference (Victoria, BC), meetings, the website, and the *Bulletin*.

The EDI Committee led the Renewal Task Force (RTF), formed after a June 2024 discussion to address equity, diversity, and inclusion concerns. The RTF held several meetings and produced a final report. The monthly "Water Cooler" chats, organized by the Professional Development Committee, were well-received, providing members with an informal platform to discuss Ombuds work.

Kemi acknowledged the efforts of both the previous Executive Committee: Carolyn Brendon (McMaster), Maureen Helt (TMU), Whitney Barrett (Western), Kemi Oke, Jennifer Meister (Western), and Kamini Bernard (SAIT), and the Interim Executive Committee: Kemi Oke, Laurel Wilkie, Remonia Stoddart-Morrison (University of Alberta), Rob Thompson (Camosun College), Julie Boncompain (Polytechnique Montreal) expressing gratitude for their contributions during a challenging period.

4. Report of the Treasurer

Kemi invited the interim ACCUO Co-Treasurers, Remonia Stoddart-Morrison and Rob Thompson, to present their report. The Report provided an overview of the ACCUO Financial Statement for 2023-24, highlighting income and expenses. Remonia thanked Jennifer Meister, the outgoing Treasurer, for preparing the Statement. Members had no questions.

On motion duly made, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED,

THAT the 2023-2024 Treasurer's Report, dated November 8, 2024, be approved.

5. Proposed Budget 2024-25

Kemi invited the ACCUO Treasurers (Remonia Stoddart-Morrison and Rob Thompson), to present the proposed budget. Members asked about the budget for promotional materials and translation. Members discussed the need for a new banner, for visibility, as one had been purchased many years ago and its location was unknown. Remonia reported that exact details regarding translation costs were unknown at this time, however funds had been set aside to support some translation needs. Rob advised members that they would be invited to pay their 2024-25 membership fees in the coming weeks, with no change to the fees for 2024-25.

6. Committee Reports

Kemi noted for members that the following ACCUO Standing Committees (EDI Committee; Communications Team; International Relations Committee) had submitted their annual reports, with a

summary of activities, membership, and several highlights of planned initiatives. The reports were included with the agenda package. Members were encouraged to join, should they be interested. Members had no questions.

7. Report of the ACCUO Renewal Task Force

The Chair of the Renewal Taskforce, Tanny Marks (Vancouver Community College), was invited to present the Report. Tanny began by acknowledging the limitations of the Report – the report had not yet been translated into French and associate members had not been included in the survey.

Tanny outlined the Task Force membership, purpose, guiding principles, terms of reference, and methodology. She presented an overview of the recommendations that were submitted to the Executive Committee and shared with members on the listserv, regarding the following issues: equity, diversity and inclusion; communication and engagement; resourcing and capacity; committee recruitment; funds and fees; and governance.

Martine Conway (University of Ottawa) expressed her opinion that the Task Force's urgency was self-imposed, and she viewed the process as undermining the democratic principles of ACCUO. She suggested that an alternative approach would have been for the interim Executive Committee to attend to membership/admin tasks and rebuilding before a Task Force was assembled and surveyed members for feedback. She appreciated that the Task Force had also focused on member engagement, structural change, and conflict within the organization. Tanny thanked Martine for her feedback, responding that while it was initially thought the Task Force would focus on EDI, this was only part of the report. She concluded by adding that there would have been benefit to slow down, and there were lessons learned from the process. Tanny asked Edmun Natkunarajah (TMU) for assistance with translating the presentation slide deck. Kemi confirmed that the Executive Committee would commence review of the recommendations report.

8. Elections

Kemi invited the ACCUO Election Officers, George Cole (Algonquin College), Annette O'Hara (University of Canada West), and Natalie Sharpe (University of Alberta), to present the proposed slate of members to sit on the ACCUO Executive for 2024-25, as follows:

- President - Kemi Oke (York University)
- Secretary - Emma Thacker (University of Toronto)
- Co-Treasurer - Remonia Stoddart-Morrison (University of Alberta)
- Co-Treasurer - Rob Thompson (Camosun College)
- Member at Large - Jacky Rivas (Norquest College)
- Member at Large - Edmun Natkunarajah (Toronto Metropolitan University)

- Member at Large - Laurel Wilkie (University of Alberta)

Members discussed whether the proposed slate for Treasurer and Member-at-Large were in alignment with the constitution. It was clarified that, according to the ACCUO Constitution, the Treasurer role was permitted to include two members with financial signing authority. The need for increased membership on the Executive Committee was also emphasized, echoing points made in the Renewal presentation, to enhance capacity and support. It was also noted that if two members from the same institution were to serve on the Executive Committee, only one would hold voting privileges.

On motion duly made, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED,

THAT the ACCUO Executive Committee membership, as described by the Elections Officers, be approved, effective November 28, 2024.

9. Minutes of the Previous AGM – May 24, 2023

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on May 24, 2023, were approved.

On motion duly made, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED,

THAT the minutes of the previous meeting, dated May 24, 2023, be approved.

10. Business arising from the minutes of May 24, 2023

There was no business arising from the report of the previous meeting.

11. Member Recognition Awards

Kemi noted that the Awards Committee positions were currently vacant. She then expressed her thanks to the outgoing Awards Committee, Communications Team, the Professional Development Committee, the International Relations Committee, those members who had contributed to ombuds conferences and events, the outgoing Executive Committee, and the interim Executive Committee.

12. Other Business

Martine Conway expressed her gratitude towards the previous Executive Committee, acknowledging the contributions of Carolyn Brendon, Maureen Helt, Whitney Barrett, Kemi Oke, Jennifer Meister, and

Kamini Bernard. She highlighted that Jennifer Meister had taken on dual responsibilities as both Secretary and Treasurer during her term. Martine noted the contributions of Carolyn Brendon and Heather Trojek (Queen’s) to the ACCUO/FCO Conference in Victoria, BC (October 2024).

Martine Conway raised a concern about the conflict experienced within the ACCUO membership over the past year, suggesting that the new Executive Committee consider ways to attempt reconciliation. Julie Boncompain (Polytechnique Montréal) responded in agreement and noted that some attempts at reconciliation had already been made, and that additional attempts would come forward in time. Shirley Nakata (UBC) added that it was important to broaden the scope of accountability, not just for recent events, but in a way that fostered greater authenticity within the group, to repair and rebuild. Kemi agreed, emphasizing that addressing these issues was important for healing and moving forward.

13. Question Period

Members had no questions.

Adjournment

Kemi thanked the members for their attendance and remarked that she would share with members the Standing Committee mandates.

Meeting adjourned at 1:24 pm (EST)

Secretary

Chair

December 4, 2024

/ejt

NOTE: Minutes approved at the ACCUO AGM – June 19, 2025.