Report of the Ombudsperson for Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment

Executive Summary
July 2015 to June 2016
Submitted by Ruth Chang, July 2016

I. Summary of activity
The activity was as follows:

- A complaint about APA disability accommodations at the 2015 Pacific divisional meeting
- A request from the chair of the APA Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion to write a clear APA complaint procedure for posting at the APA website
- Five complaints about possible noncompliance with APA policies of job advertisements in PhilJobs and in the APA Journal of Philosophy
- A request for guidance and help concerning bullying behavior at a graduate student event.
- A request for suggestions and help in how to conduct a departmental climate survey
- A request for help about a potential sexual misconduct case involving a recent graduate.
- Several requests for APA action on the mistreatment of philosophers in Turkey
- Several requests for help concerning racist attacks against a senior philosopher who wrote an article for the NYTs Stone column
- A request for help in adjudicating internal matters of an APA committee
- A request for help in contributing to the Diversity and Inclusiveness Syllabus Collection at the APA website
- A request from the Chair of the APA Committee on Sexual Harassment to discuss ways to help graduate students receive training in sexual harassment, bystander actions, and the like
- A request from two members to help graduate students of a senior philosopher involved in a sexual harassment scandal to gain access to other mentors.

Deliverables
Responses were taken to every request until a satisfactory resolution was achieved. In addition, there were two APA deliverables: 1) A rewritten (with Amy Ferrer and Cheshire Calhoun) APA complaint procedure and FAQs, which was approved by the board in May and has been posted on the APA website, 2) creation of two flyers to be distributed to all departments fall 2016; one flyer advertises the Ombudsperson position, and the other is a template that departments can fill in with their local information and post locally.

There were 21 separate incidents logged, most of them minor. Descriptions of the cases and how they were handled (with all identifying information removed) appear in the full confidential report filed with the National Office.
II. **Issues**

It was a relatively quiet year for the ombudsperson in contrast to the very heavy caseload of the previous year. One possible explanation for the drop in activity is the newly-published clarification of the Ombudsperson role on the APA website.

The nature of the complaints and contact received suggests that some portion of the membership mistakenly understands the Ombudsperson as a spokesperson for the APA. Much of this year’s activity involved communicating information from the APA to the membership. This misapprehension may be corrected by the new APA ombudsperson flyer to be distributed to all departments fall 2016.

Another general issue raised by the complaints received concern the speed with which the APA can respond to events on the ground, often unfolding quickly through the media. There may be frustration among some members at the institutional pace at which the APA operates. Without additional resources, I do not see how this problem, if it is a problem, can be remedied. My own experience with APA responsiveness has been remarkably good.

A final issue concerns the role of the APA in handling alleged sexual misconduct or other scandal that garners media attention. The board might wish to discuss some general guidelines for whether and how the APA will be involved in media attention given to individual philosophers embroiled in scandal and to the profession in general.