

# MSU's first ombudsman Rust finds cases vary

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After handling some 40 student cases, James D. Rust, MSU's first ombudsman, sees his new role in a somewhat different light.

What has probably surprised Rust the

most, he said, is the wide variety of complaints he has heard in the last three weeks.

"Boy, I've heard all kinds of things," he said, from complaints on football ticket distribution to tuition.

One young lady in her second year here, but still with freshman standing, called Rust one night to see if he could help her with her transcript, so that the credits she earned this summer could be accredited to her this term. She could go to a party with no hours. But Rust had to turn away her request; there are some things which are just outside the ombudsman's jurisdiction.



RUST

Rust said the students who have come to see him have been, for the most part, troubled and courteous. And he had high praise for every office on campus he has had to deal with in handling the students' problems, from the provost to the department secretaries.

Rust's sense of humor is depicted in two signs on the bulletin board of the outer office. One has Linus of Peanuts fame with his blanket, proclaiming: "No problem is so big or complicated that it can't be run away from!" And the second has a frustrated character saying, "My work is so secret . . . I don't even know what I'm doing."

But Rust's work these last three weeks belies what the signs say.

Of the approximate 40 students he has interviewed, he has been able to help in a majority of the cases, he said. But there were times when he had to tell a student that he simply did not have a case.

"I hope students will come to me," Rust said, "I'll do what I can."

The ombudsman's office is the former home of the nursing education department, and looks out onto Old Health Center from the basement of Morrill Hall. It has been outfitted primarily with borrowed chairs and a conference table from dormitory and food service. The office won't be decorated and finished until it is moved to a permanent site, possibly in the new Administration Building, although Rust would like to be housed in the library.

Since the student flow in his office varies from heavy on certain days to nearly nil on others, Rust would like to resume some teaching duties winter and spring terms. Before accepting the position of ombudsman, Rust was the assistant dean for undergraduate affairs in the College of Arts and Letters and a professor of English.

The position of ombudsman was created in the Academic Freedom Report to aid students in cutting red tape in searching for solutions for their various problems. In the area of academics, and particularly with grades, however, Rust insists that the students follow the procedures as established in the freedom report, going first to the instructor and working through the department before coming to the ombudsman.