

Introduction:

At the most fundamental level, an ombuds [ombudsman or ombudsperson] is one who assists individuals and groups in the resolution of conflicts or concerns. Ombuds work in all types of organizations, including government agencies, colleges and universities, corporations, hospitals and other medical facilities, and news organizations.

- The principles under which the Faculty Ombuds functions are consistent with the [Standards of Practice](#) and the [IOA Code of Ethics](#) of the International Ombudsman Association.
- The services of the Faculty Ombuds are available to tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track faculty on all USC system-wide campuses except for [USC Upstate](#) which has its own Faculty Ombuds.
- The Division of Student Affairs has a student ombudsperson, Lisa Jerald (777.4172) who deals directly with conflicts and concerns of undergraduate students.
- Graduate students with conflicts or concerns are encouraged to contact Dale Moore in the Graduate School at 777.8237
- The Faculty Civility Advocate is charged with resolving complaints of faculty-on-faculty workplace bullying under ACAF 1.80. If you would like to meet with the Faculty Civility Advocate, please contact her at 777-7419 or fca@mailbox.sc.edu

Ombuds practice is guided by four ethical standards:

- **INDEPENDENT:** The faculty ombuds is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.
- **INFORMAL:** The faculty ombuds, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.
- **NEUTRAL:** The faculty ombuds, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The faculty ombuds does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.
- **CONFIDENTIAL:** The faculty ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

What we do:

- Listen
- Offer information about University policies and procedures
- Discuss concerns and clarify the issues
- Help identify and evaluate a range of options for resolving a problem
- Gather information and offer referrals to other resources
- Help visitors prepare for a difficult conversation
- Facilitate communication, indirectly or through shuttle diplomacy with concerned parties
- Work for collaborative agreements
- Track perceived issues and trends
- Make recommendations for institutional change
- Do all our work informally

What we don't do:

- Make decisions for a visitor
- Establish, change, or set aside policies
- Offer legal advice
- Offer psychological counseling
- Participate in formal processes such as Academic Grievance Procedures
- Serve as an agent of notice for the University
- Serve as an advocate for any individual
- Participate in formal investigations or write case reports.
- Serve as a neutral adjudicator of complaints
- Create or maintain records or reports for the organization except for an annual report to the Faculty Senate

What we did in 2017-2018:

- Met with a total of 50 faculty visitors, responded to many phone calls and consultation requests
- Took many phone calls and email requests from faculty, staff and students for information and consultation
- Most cases resolved without initiating a formal grievance process
- We received extraordinary cooperation from Provost's Office, HR, EEOC, University Counsel, deans, chairs, and others
- The Faculty Ombuds continued his participation as a member of the Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP) Appeals Committee of IOA. I also serve as a mentor for several newly appointed ombuds at other academic institutions.
- On November 1, 2017 I spoke at Faculty Senate and summarized the annual report of the Faculty Ombuds for 2016-2017. This and all previous annual reports are posted on the faculty ombuds website: <http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/annual.shtml>
- In January and August of each year, the Faculty Ombuds provides materials to attendees at the New Faculty Orientation describing the work of the Faculty Ombuds.
- On April 13, 2018 I participated in a workshop entitled "Faculty First Responders: How to Address Allegations of Misbehavior"
- This year I was invited to address attendees at the New Faculty Orientation in August.

12-year summary (2006-2018):

- Over the past twelve years the Faculty Ombuds has assisted almost 600 faculty members for an average of 50 visitors per year.
- The number of faculty members utilizing the services of the Faculty Ombuds seems to be in keeping with many Carnegie Foundation Tier I institutions who publish an annual report and who I have been tracking over the past 12 years (average about 53.7 visitors per year based on 197 annual reports).
- A review of the most recent 3 years of visitors to the faculty ombuds reveals that about half are male faculty members and the other half are female faculty members.

Annual Report – IOA Uniform Data Reporting Categories developed in 2003:

These same categories were used in this report in in our 11 previous annual reports.

(1) Evaluative Relationships - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. senior faculty-junior faculty, program director faculty, chair-faculty, dean-faculty, faculty-student). (17 visitors in 2017-2018) (163 visitors all years - 27%)

(2) Career Progression and Development - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, or what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation). (12 in 2017-2018) (118 visitors all years - 20%)

(3) Peer and Colleague Relationships - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a direct supervisory relationship (e.g., two faculty members within the same department or conflict involving faculty members of the same college or unit). (3 visitors in 2017-2018) (76 visitors all years - 13%)

(4) Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud, or abuse. (8 visitors in 2017-2018) (56 visitors all years - 9%)

(5) Compensation & Benefits - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits, and other benefit programs. (6 visitors in 2017-2018) (52 visitors all years - 9%)

(6) Values, Ethics, and Standards - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards. (3 visitors in 2017-2018) (49 visitors all years - 8%)

(7) Services/Administrative Issues - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices. (No visitors in 2017-2018) (32 visitors all years - 5%)

(8) Safety, Health, and Physical Environment - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health, and Infrastructure-related issues. (1 visitor in 2017-2018) (31 visitors all years - 5%)

(9) Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization. (No visitors in 2017-2018) (23 visitors all years - 4%)

This report provides a summary of the work of the Faculty Ombuds the past 12 years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	All years
Reporting categories	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2006-2018
<i>Evaluative Relationships</i>	23	12	16	7	4	15	15	13	9	15	17	17	163 27%
<i>Career Progression and Development</i>	12	18	8	15	6	14	8	9	8	3	5	12	118 20%
<i>Peer and Colleague Relationships</i>	0	5	9	10	9	6	8	9	5	6	6	3	76 13%
<i>Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance</i>	0	1	3	3	4	8	5	5	8	8	3	8	56 9%
<i>Compensation and Benefits</i>	6	4	0	3	3	4	3	3	6	7	7	6	52 9%
<i>Values, Ethics, and Standards</i>	9	3	11	0	6	4	5	5	1	1	1	3	49 8%
<i>Services /Administrative Issues</i>	6	4	0	5	4	3	2	2	2	1	3	0	32 5%
<i>Safety, Health, and Physical Environment</i>	5	4	0	0	8	1	3	2	1	3	3	1	31 5%
<i>Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related</i>	0	2	2	5	1	0	0	5	5	3	0	0	23 4%
	61	53	49	48	45	55	49	53	45	47	45	50	600

Final Comments:

There are a few lingering matters that concerned faculty have brought to my attention that have challenged my abilities over the past few years. These include:

- several units with alleged hostile or intimidating work environments in which faculty of all ranks especially junior or nontenured faculty do not want to take the matter to the Faculty Civility Advocate for fear of eventual retribution;
- the lack of appropriate communication with, accommodation for and respect toward faculty and staff by senior faculty or faculty administrators;
- concerns over unresolved salary issues or money due faculty who believe they have excellent teaching, research and service records in comparison with others at the same rank. Some transparent system needs to be established to resolve these issues that is fair to all;
- screaming or shouting and threats of retaliation by senior administrators at faculty members writing emails questioning changes in the faculty member's duties, request for a salary increase or request for consideration for promotion and tenure. "Get in line and don't ever..." "Not playing nice". Lack of cooperation often leads to retaliation;
- withdrawal of service or teaching opportunities for those getting ready for post-tenure review. Set up to fail?
- in some units there is not much opportunity for faculty to move up administratively, receive appropriate mentoring or assistance with career development;
- micromanagement by senior administrators of faculty research activities including applying only to agencies with high indirect costs;
- conflicts between USC policy and departmental policy regarding employment opportunities outside salaried position;
- lack of shared governance in some departments.

Whatever success has been achieved during these past twelve years by the Faculty Ombuds is attributable to the cooperation and support of faculty and administrative leaders in the University who were willing to listen to various matters brought to their attention and work with all parties concerned to find a fair and just resolution to the issues at hand. The Faculty Ombuds is particularly appreciative of the Provost's willingness to support the work of this office without violating the independence, neutrality, informality, or confidentiality of the ombuds process.

Jim Augustine

www.sc.edu/ombuds/

Previous annual reports may be found at <http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/annual.shtml>