

Faculty Ombudsman Report 2013-2014
Covering the period from September 16, 2013 – August 31, 2014

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The office of the faculty ombudsman was established by Faculty Rule 3335-5-45.3 in 2009. Professor Jack Rall set up the office and served as the first ombudsman until September 16, 2014 when I was appointed. I would like to thank Jack, Tim Gerber, Susan Williams and others who participated in the onboarding process and facilitated the transfer of the ombudsman duties. I would also like to thank the Office of Academic Affairs for providing funds to attend a meeting of the International Ombudsman Association to learn best practices for serving as an ombudsman.

Responsibilities of the faculty ombudsman are to serve as an advisor to faculty and assist them in determining the viability of their issues, to direct faculty to appropriate offices and policies, to mediate early stage complaints informally, and to present an annual report to faculty council. The office operates in keeping with the standards of practice established by the International Ombudsman Association, which are to maintain independence, confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, impartiality/neutrality, and informality. A more detailed description of these principles is available on the ombudsman website. The Ohio State Office of Legal Affairs has determined that the ombudsman must report allegations of sexual harassment or intended violence to self or others. Notes maintained by the ombudsman are not subject to the open records act. Faculty are not required to consult the ombudsman and the ombudsman does not advocate for either the faculty or the administration.

The ombudsman had roughly 82 interactions (meetings, phone calls or emails) during the time period with 61 different faculty or groups of faculty. Faculty came from 38 different units on campus and two regional campuses. As shown in the accompanying table, these numbers are similar to those seen in years past, although the number of different units served increased somewhat. All faculty ranks were represented, including instructors and emeriti. Most faculty interacted with the ombudsman only once, although several interacted with the ombudsman multiple times over the course of the year. In general, faculty contacted the ombudsman because they:

- were seeking information about a university process/policy with which they were engaged or were concerned that the process was flawed;
- disagreed with a decision made by a chair, dean or director and wanted information on how to appeal the decision;

- wanted assistance in analyzing or discussing options for dealing with a situation or issue.
- More specifically, issues or perceived concerns brought to the ombudsman included:

Conflict with Colleagues

- lack of collegiality (exclusion)
- research collaboration (authorship, patent)
- committee management

Department/Department Chair Issues:

- workload and changes to workload (teaching, research or service)
- bullying
- retaliation
- student evaluations of teaching
- salary/compensation
- graduate student management
- performance of the chair
- unpaid leave
- poor faculty mentoring
- changes to department patterns of administration
- faculty hiring
- rights of emeritus faculty
- improper evaluation
- faculty professional leave
- failure to follow department patterns of administration
- lack of integrity

College/Dean Issues

- rights and responsibilities of principle investigators/researchers
- retaliation
- supplemental compensation
- abolishment of unit
- non-renewal of contract
- failure to follow university rules
- rights of authors
- workload policy

University Issues

- football ticket distribution
- human resources/mediation
- subverting the intent of university rules

Assistance with University Policies

- Promotion and Tenure (promotion, fourth year review)
- Conflict of Interest
- Sexual Harassment
- Family and Workplace Violence
- Faculty Misconduct
- Faculty Professional Leave

The following observations are based on this past years' service as faculty ombudsman:

1. It is helpful if the department and college patterns of administration and appointment, promotion and tenure documents are kept up to date and are readily available to faculty.
2. Many faculty are not given the opportunity to evaluate the performance of department chairs and other administrators on an annual basis. Providing faculty with a more regular opportunity to evaluate administrative personnel might be helpful.

Finally I would like to thank the Ohio State Chapter of the AAUP, the Office of Academic Affairs, Human Resources and the University Senate for their assistance this past year.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne E. Olson

Faculty Ombudsman and Professor Emerita