Ombuds Office Role: The Ombuds Office assists faculty, students, staff, and administrators in managing and resolving campus-related conflicts and complaints. Primarily, these are interpersonal disputes and/or concerns involving university bureaucracy (e.g., decisions, policies, practices). It also provides workshops for the campus community about conflict-related topics. And, it provides observations and comments for campus leaders; primarily about trends and systemic issues as well as ideas for making improvements.

Standards of Practice: The Ombuds Office follows the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) see: http://www.ombudsassociation.org/standards/Stds_Practice_1-07.pdf. The key elements of these Ethics and Standards are:

Confidential: Visitors’ identities and the contents of their conversations will remain private. Only with permission would Ombuds contact others at the university to help resolve a dispute. The only exceptions to confidentiality are disclosures of imminent harm to self or others.

Informal: The Ombuds Office has no decision-making authority and maintains no records (other than statistical data). Ombuds Office staff members do not participate in formal procedures. Use of the office is strictly voluntary.

Neutral/Impartial: Ombuds maintain no personal stake in the outcome of any dispute. The Ombuds Office does not advocate for individuals.

Independent: Ombuds exercise autonomy regarding their responsibilities. The Director of the Ombuds Office reports to the Provost for administrative purposes only.

Not an “Office of Notice:” Following the recommendations of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and the requirements for ombudsmen with the Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner® designation, the Ombuds Office is not authorized to accept notice of claims against the University about issues such as allegations of harassment or discrimination. Allegations are not investigated by the Ombuds Office. Instead, the office functions as a confidential resource for visitors to discuss their concerns and consider options for addressing them. When individuals who visit the Ombuds Office want to make the University aware of their concerns, they are given options to do that, (e.g., contact an administrator or offices with investigative authority).

Ombuds Office Staffing Changes:

Faculty Ombuds: After more than eight years of service, Associate Professor Emerita Lee Potts, retired from her Faculty Ombuds position at the conclusion of the May 2014 semester. Emeritus Professor Jerry Hauser, former Chair of the Dept. of Communication and of the Boulder Faculty Assembly (BFA), joined Emerita Professor Emily Calhoun from the CU Law School as our newest Faculty Ombuds. Professor...
Hauser brings significant experience in leadership, communication skills, and knowledge of the CU Boulder campus culture.

Administrative Assistant: While working in the Ombuds Office for the past four years, Gina Iannelli, our Administrative Assistant, completed a master’s degree in Counseling and eventually secured an academic advisor position in a nursing program at the Community College of Aurora (in collaboration with a program at CU Denver). In March, we hired Boulder native and CU alumna, Natasha Scholze, as Administrative Assistant for the Ombuds Office. Tasha brings a background in Communication, event planning, experience with web technology, social media, and a cheerful disposition.

About This Annual Report . . .

Time Period: This report is about the work of the Ombuds Office for the period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.

Contents: The report provides information about the number of contacts with various constituent groups, the number and kinds of issues they presented, and the kinds of assistance provided by Ombuds Office. It also describes:

- Outreach and workshop activities during the 2013-2014 academic year;
- Contributions of CU Boulder ombuds staff to the burgeoning organizational ombudsman profession; and
- Observations and recommendations

Constituents: The Ombuds Office assists every constituent group at the University – across all divisions.

Classification of Issues

The CU Boulder Ombuds Office uses the classification system developed by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) to describe the reasons constituents have contact with an organizational ombuds office. This system includes nine broad categories (see below) and over 80 subcategories used to classify issues, questions, and concerns. Although visitors may raise many issues in discussions, only the issues for which options are discussed are counted. The IOA categories and descriptions appear in Appendix B of this report.

Number of Contacts with University Community Members

Total: The combined number of contacts (both in case and outreach activities) over the period covered by this Report was 1996. Of these, 1547 were contacts that occurred via outreach activities (i.e., workshops, fairs, presentations, etc.) and 449 occurred via case work. The majority of this report will describe details about case-related work. Details about Outreach Activities appear in Appendix A.

Who Did the Ombuds Office Assist?

Ombuds Office staff members assisted 377 constituents with 343 separate cases involving 912 separate issues. Details about the number of staff, faculty, students, and parents/others and the number of issues with which they were assisted appear on the next page. In assisting these individuals we contacted an additional 73 individuals for relevant information about policies, procedures, etc. These contacts are not a part of the totals below, which only reflect constituents we assisted directly. However, including these contacts brings the total number of case contacts with campus community members in 2013-2014 to 449.
Number of Constituents and Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituents</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/Others</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>377</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With permission of visitors, Ombuds Office staff members also contacted and assisted 31 people with whom visitors were experiencing conflict. Their numbers are included in those presented above because the neutral/impartial role of the office means assistance is equally available to and provided for them.

What Were Their Concerns?

Note: The Ombuds Office does not formally investigate concerns or make determinations of who is right or wrong, etc. Issues are best viewed as uninvestigated allegations or simply perceptions of those involved. And, almost by definition, in conflict situations, those perceptions often vary.

Many visitors presented multiple issues (which is why the number of “issues” (912) is greater than the number of people assisted (377). As was the case in previous years, over 60% of all issues presented involved conflicts in interpersonal relationships. Forty-seven (47) percent were in “Evaluative Relationships” (i.e., relationships in which one party evaluates the work or performance of another such as supervisors and employees or professors and students). Thirteen (13) percent were within “Peer and Colleague Relationships” (i.e., relationships in which no evaluative component exists). The remaining 40% were “system” issues concerning decisions, actions, or services involving the CU Boulder bureaucracy. Of these, the most common (12%) was in the category of “Services/Administrative Issues.” The chart below provides a visual representation of issues presented by visitors to the Ombuds Office.

Constituent Concerns: 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Parents/Others</th>
<th>Total # of Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compensation and Benefits</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Relationships</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer/Colleague Relationships</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Progression and Development</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety, Health, and Physical Environment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services/Administrative Issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational, Strategic, and Mission-Related</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values, Ethics, and Standards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Selected</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is a breakdown of these concerns by Staff, Faculty, and Students – the largest constituent groups for whom the Ombuds Office provides assistance.
Staff:

1. Evaluative Relationships (234 issues)

   Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., supervisor-employee). Common concerns included: problems in communication, departmental climate issues, perceptions of disrespect, and consultations with administrators or supervisors about conflict among their supervisees.

2. Peer and Colleague Relationships (42 issues)

   Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have an evaluative relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department). The most frequent examples included issues of communication, cooperation, and/or respect.

3. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission-Related (24 issues)

   Description: Questions, concerns, or issues that relate to the whole or some part of the university. Among the most frequent situations included concerns related to organizational climate, use of positional power/authority, and change management.

Faculty:

1. Evaluative Relationships (98 issues)

   Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., chair-faculty). The most frequent concerns included: performance expectations, communication issues, and respect.

2. Peer and Colleague Relationships (33 issues)

   Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a formal evaluative relationship (e.g., two faculty members within the same department or on the same research team). While reasons for disputes varied widely, the common threads were faculty members who expressed concerns about communication and/or respect with colleagues.

3. Career Progression and Development (23 issues)

   Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries regarding entering and leaving a job and what it entails (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation). The most frequent concerns included: promotion or tenure and general career progress issues.

4. Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance (22 issues)

   Description: Questions, concerns, or issues that may create a legal or financial risk for the university or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud, or abuse. The most frequent concerns related to matters involving perceived discrimination, harassment, or disability-related concerns. (Note: It is important to remember two key things about this category: 1) the Ombuds Office does not investigate allegations, 2) anyone with concerns (e.g., those making allegations, those accused, bystanders, people with authority, other stakeholders,
etc.) are equally welcome to use our services, and 3) we are not an “office of notice” and refer people who wish to put the University on notice to appropriate offices where this can occur.)

Students:

Evaluative Relationships (106 issues)

1. Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., faculty-student). The most common situations included disputes over grading and, to a much lesser extent, problems with communication and/or respect.

2. Peer and Relationships (53 issues)

Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers who do not have an evaluative relationship (e.g., students working together in a student organization or on a group project in a class). The most frequent examples included issues of communication and respect.

3. Services and Administrative Concerns (47 issues)

Description: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about services or administrative offices. Common examples included academic or administrative decisions and, to a much lesser extent, quality of services and responsiveness or timeliness.

Gender: Almost 65% of those initiating contact with the Ombuds Office to ask for assistance were females, 34% were male, and one percent was unknown.

“Focus of Concern” (Constituent group of those with whom visitors had conflicts)

The majority of those requesting Ombuds Office assistance expressed concerns about the actions of other people:

- Staff members were the focus of concern for 162 visitors. Of these, 119 were other staff members, 24 were faculty members, 20 were students and 10 were parents/others.

- Faculty members were the focus of concern for 134 visitors. Of these, 58 were students, 40 were other faculty members, 24 were staff members, and 12 were parents/others.

- Students were the focus of concern for 37 visitors. Of these, 17 were other students, 11 were faculty members, and 2 were staff members.

Administrative Divisions

The Ombuds Office assisted constituents with concerns originating within administrative divisions as follows: Academic Affairs (207), Student Affairs (43), Administration (38), the area supervised by the Vice Chancellor for Research (24), the area supervised by the Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Finance Officer (20), University System Administration (10), the areas immediately reporting to the Chancellor, excluding those above (9), and departments reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement [ODECE] (3). We also assisted an additional 23 people for whom no division was recorded.) The organizational charts for all of these administrative areas can be viewed at: http://chancellor.colorado.edu/chancellors-administrative-organization.
As the largest division, it is not surprising that Academic Affairs was the largest source of Ombuds Office cases. Also, constituents in these cases included all constituencies (i.e., students, faculty, staff, and parents) while constituencies from other divisions were usually significantly more limited. The chart below provides a visual image of Ombuds Office casework within administrative divisions.

### Assistance Provided by the Ombuds Office in Individual Cases:

The following types of assistance were made available to everyone who requested help from the Ombuds Office. The majority of those we assisted utilized only Individual consultations (often involving multiple interactions) but many received additional forms of assistance, as well.

**Individual Consultation (376 people):** Individual consultations were provided to everyone who asked for our help and to everyone we contacted with permission. We listened to peoples’ concerns and engaged them in discussions designed to help them clarify their goals, and identify and choose among various informal, formal, and administrative options to address their concerns. We provided a safe place for them to “think out loud” about whether and/or how to effectively communicate with another person (or people). And we often provided information about strategies that tend to work well - and ones that don’t – for managing difficult conversations.

For those with concerns about university bureaucracy (e.g., decisions, policies, rules, requirements, etc.), we helped them get the information to navigate the bureaucracy effectively. Sometimes we helped people understand policies or procedures or what we understood was likely to be important to those reviewing their requests or circumstances and helped them explore options for presenting their concerns. In some cases, we provided feedback about draft written correspondence (e.g., petitions or appeals) for improved clarity, organization, brevity, and/or tact.

**Contacted Person/Office (38 people):** We contacted individuals or offices in two different circumstances: 1) to serve as “shuttle diplomats,” which often included exploring the concerns or perspectives of those we called and/or their possible interest in mediation or 2) to gather information about policies, procedures, expectations, etc. from people not involved in the situation. In the first situation those called are offered Ombuds Office assistance. In the second, they are asked for information that allows Ombuds Office staff to better assist visitors requesting our help.
**Mediation/Facilitation (24 people):** We provided a structured mediation between two parties or group facilitation for larger groups. Mediation requires separate meetings with the disputing parties prior to mediation session(s). Typically, it takes two or three mediation sessions to reach resolution on issues. Facilitation is provided for group discussions, retreats, and other meetings to assist groups in identifying issues and making decisions.

**Encouraged Visitor to refer others to Ombuds Office (21 people):** Sometimes visitors - primarily those in leadership or supervisory roles - come to the Ombuds Office to discuss concerns related to the conflict or disputes of others. In addition to helping these visitors consider their own options for assisting in these matters, we often conveyed the willingness for them to refer those about whom they expressed concerns to the Ombuds Office.

**Referral (39 people):** Often - and usually in addition to receiving help from the Ombuds Office - visitors are referred to other resources for assistance. Classified staff members who want to pursue a formal grievance, for example, are referred to the Office of Labor Relations. As the Ombuds Office is not an office of notice, those wishing to put the university on notice about illegal harassment or discrimination are referred to the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance. Or, in cases where the alleged offending party is a student, such referrals are made to the Office of Student Conduct. Staff members from these offices also refer people to the Ombuds Office, usually when formal actions are not possible or appropriate and alternative options are needed to manage or resolve conflicts.

### Assistance Provided 2013-2014

Every case involved at least one conversation with someone requesting help. Often, this required between two to five interactions. For a small number it required between five and ten. For a few, it included more than 10. And, as noted above, many situations required one or more interactions with additional people, as well.

**Discussion**

Since the first Ombudsman was appointed at the University of Colorado Boulder (circa 1974) to assist students in dealing with perceived bureaucratic unfairness, the ombuds role on campus (and nation-wide)
has evolved. Services were expanded in 1985 to all constituencies within the University. Due in large part to the emergence of ombuds professional organizations (with codes of ethics and standards of practice), those now called “organizational ombuds” still assist individuals with system-related concerns, but they also help frequently with interpersonal and group conflict management issues. In fact, the primary reason faculty, staff, and students contact the office now is for help with interpersonal disputes. Most of these occur within “Evaluative Relationships” (i.e., involving power differences) and a smaller number within “Peer and Colleague Relationships.” Together, these two categories account for about 60% of our casework. And, the majority of individuals seeking our help report experiencing interpersonal disputes with someone who evaluates their work (i.e., they are typically in the “low power” position).

This, of course, means the stakes are often quite high for these individuals — and often higher than they are for the individual with whom they have conflict (e.g., a graduate student and her/his thesis advisor, an instructor and her/his chair). They often report feeling fearful about trying to address the problem.

For more than a decade the services of the Ombuds Office have been used more by staff and faculty than by students. Both the amount of use and the kinds of concerns for which faculty and staff seek help suggests there is a large and continuing need for the services provided by the office. And, there is likely an unmet need among students for Ombuds Offices services. However, we have made strides in the past year in reaching out to students. We did a major revision of our website, enhanced our Facebook presence, added a new Twitter feed, developed new student-focused brochures, and attached magnets to residence hall refrigerators. We believe this strategy will be an especially effective way to reach students. We would like to better establish the office as a “go-to” campus resource for any conflict/communication-related concerns. An example of one such recent effort, available on the Office’s Facebook page, can be viewed here: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikkTmgLz3IA).

Some visitors asked for Ombuds Office help before they attempt any other method of addressing their concerns because they wanted to carefully identify and consider all their options before deciding what to do. However, many — especially those with system-related concerns - came after being unable to resolve their concerns through direct, administrative, or formal channels. And, sometimes their attempts to resolve the problem at the appropriate level of the organization resulted in their having secondary complaints to the Ombuds Office about a lack of responsiveness. Ombuds Office staff members frequently hear, “You are the first person who has listened to me.” Regardless of the outcome, for some this, alone, was perceived to be a valuable service. And it seemed to “humanize” the University for them.

Workplace Bullying

For most cases involving Interpersonal or Peer/Colleague Relationships, frequent concerns expressed by visitors had to do with respect, communication, trust, and/or cooperation. But, in 2013-2014, the Ombuds Office staff spoke with 49 different people about concerns regarding workplace bullying. Given our neutral role, this number also involves a few people who were accused of bullying others. According to one definition (see: http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/problem/definition/) it is “. . . repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators. It is abusive conduct that is: a) threatening, humiliating, or intimidating, or b) work interference — sabotage — which prevents work from getting done, or c) verbal abuse.”

What people call “bullying” can include patterns of small “micro-aggressions” (e.g., “the silent treatment,” eye-rolling, speaking “over” others) over time to overt forms of aggression (e.g., yelling, threatening, making hyper-critical or demeaning comments in the presence of others). The more subtle forms can, over time, have insidious, undermining effects and send the message, “You are not welcome here” or even, “You are not safe here.” And when these behaviors are engaged in by those with institutional authority (the most common allegation we hear), it often elicits fear or even dread in self-
described “targets.” Left unchecked, these lower level behaviors can erode unit norms, resulting in more overt and hostile behaviors being seen as “acceptable.”

By contrast, when many of these same kinds of behaviors target individuals because of their “protected class” status, the behaviors constitute “harassment” – and this is widely recognized as both University policy and Civil Rights violations. Most bullying behaviors are not “negotiable” to those experiencing them (i.e., parties are unlikely to agree that these behaviors are “acceptable” some days of the week). They are inappropriate in any working or learning environment; they contribute to attrition, and undermine the work of the University.

We have developed a standard list of options, pros, and cons we share with individuals who perceive they are targets of bullying. And we sometimes assist them in considering whether and/or how they might initiate conversations designed to set limits on these behaviors with those they believe are bullying them. In a few cases we have even attempted mediation between people who feel bullied and those they accuse of bullying them. But as this online essay (http://www.workplacebullying.org/2010/12/08/sebok-restorative-justice/) reveals, this is a risky topic for mediation and success depends on a number of critical variables; not the least of which is an alleged bully’s willingness to listen, change future behaviors, and even make amends. Engaging members of departments in setting group norms and empowering bystanders are other strategies we have promoted that seem potentially valuable in making a positive difference. There is even specialized coaching help available for those who engage in these behaviors (see: http://www.bosswhispering.com/). But, bullying is unlikely to abate unless individuals with administrative authority recognize it and make clear “we don’t do that here.” However, depending on circumstances, other cherished values (e.g., academic freedom, tenure), can sometimes limit administrators’ ability to address this problem by using administrative authority.

Organizational Culture and Climate Issues

Over the past year, we have begun to give attention to the role and potential influence of organizational culture (i.e., “how we do things around here”) within departments. And, this is particularly true with respect to departmental norms for managing conflict. New faculty or staff quickly learn “how things are done around here” in order to assimilate. All departments, of course, have “conflict norms” but these are almost never developed in a conscious manner and rarely do all departmental members have an opportunity to help write them. We have now assisted numerous departments in developing their own “Conflict Communication Protocols.” Developing these “protocols” can help empower department members to proactively develop their own group norms for dealing with conflicts. The approach we use, initially developed by Larry Hoover, a now retired UC Davis mediator, engages participants in a collaborative process to consider and answer a series of specific questions about how they will handle future conflicts when they arise within their departments.

Finally, we have taken the following additional steps in the past year that seem to expand our role into trying to help groups improve the organizational culture:

1) For the second time in two years, we invited an internationally known expert, Professor Loraleigh Keashly, to campus for workshops for faculty (and one for both staff and faculty) on the topic of “Bystander Training” for addressing workplace bullying. This work is designed to help faculty recognize things they can do in the moment or later to address workplace bullying (or other inappropriate workplace behaviors);

2) Faculty Ombuds assembled more than a dozen well-respected senior faculty members and academic administrators for a “Roundtable” discussion about the campus climate. Among other
things the discussion revealed that many members of the academic community are trying to accomplish their goals in an environment that is characterized by anxiety or fear. A partial list of concerns raised includes:

a. Faculty and academic administrators are uncertain whether they will be supported by colleagues and others if they report unprofessional conduct;

b. Department chairs believe that seeking assistance from colleagues and other administrators to address department problems will be perceived as a sign of weakness;

c. The initiation of formal disciplinary processes aggravates anxieties, exacerbates stresses and dysfunctions, and tends to result in the personalization of disagreements and the taking of “sides” within academic units and among colleagues; and

d. Individuals fear retaliation (being ostracized by colleagues or becoming the target of more formal processes) if they speak out in defense of colleagues, criticize campus policies, or discuss sensitive issues.

3) We joined with other ombuds, HR personnel, researchers, and university administrators from around the US consider how to best help our campuses deal with “abrasive conduct” (aka, “workplace bullying”) by attending the second meeting of the Consortium on Abrasive Conduct in Higher Education (CACHE) in the University of Denver;

4) We have supported the work and attended several meetings of a “grassroots” effort called the “Respect” Committee involving faculty, staff, and a few students. This group’s mission is to promote a respectful working and learning environment on campus.

5) The BFA Professional Rights and Duties policy (http://www.colorado.edu/BFA/policies/PRDpartI.html), signed by the Provost two years ago as an Academic Affairs policy, provides guidance about “Expected” and “Unacceptable” Conduct for faculty members regarding their work with other members of the university community. And it outlines responsibilities of department chairs, as well; including procedures for responding to complaints about perceived policy violations. We have begun discussions with the Provost, Faculty Affairs professionals, and members of the Office of University Counsel about ways to create added flexibility and support, particularly for chairs, in the procedures related to alleged policy violations.

**Administrative Concerns**

Approximately 35% of Ombuds Office cases involve administrative concerns. These are about things like: unfairness due to seemingly arbitrary administrative decisions, rigid or ineffective bureaucracy, unfairly or differentially applied policies or procedures, etc. These often require that we assist visitors in understanding and/or navigating various formal policies, procedures, or offices at the University. Sometimes that assistance requires that we help visitors consider how they might approach offices or decision-makers to make requests. This is a service whose value is often unrecognized. Simply telling visitors “file a petition with the X office,” assumes they understand what those evaluating such a petition
will consider important and that they have the skills to communicate effectively about their circumstances and request in writing. In our experience, many visitors – even highly educated ones - often lack one or both of these attributes. In fact, success for those with these kinds of concerns often begins with understanding the formal and informal rules of the system. Often, Ombuds Office staff members’ familiarity with the campus culture, policies, and people are quite valuable for these visitors.

**Workshops**

In the past year we have offered several workshops (multiple times) which help various members of the university community to learn skills and strategies for dealing with conflict. We made presentations to the LEAP program. And, we have presented numerous other workshops which have often resulted in additional requests for and referrals to the office for assistance. This outreach has become a larger part of our work in recent years. We believe these workshops are of much value to those who attend them. A few examples include the following:

We have offered a workshop called “Promoting a Respectful Workplace” several times in the past year through the auspices of the Department of Organizational and Employee Development and with significant promotional support from Boulder Staff Council. These workshops have been filled to capacity and evaluation feedback has been consistently outstanding.

A workshop – this one for supervisors – has been offered several times in the past year on the topic of “Dealing with Conflict Among or Between Your Direct Reports.” These have also been offered through the auspices of the Department of Organizational and Employee Development. Some researchers have suggested that when low level “micro-aggressions” are left unchecked, they tend to become the norm and, eventually, degrade the organizational climate. This workshop helps supervisors to recognize the difference between “conflict” and “conduct” issues and to develop skills and strategies appropriate for dealing with either. Again, the evaluation feedback for this workshop has been consistently outstanding.

A workshop called “Assessing Whether and How to Address Workplace Conflict,” is part of Organizational and Employee Development’s “Highly Effective Manager” training series. This fast-paced course assists supervisors in clarifying and communicating their own expectations, understanding various conflict-related roles they will likely be called upon to play as supervisors, and better understanding the criteria for playing each of these roles. It also presents a few key skills for managing challenging kinds of conflicts when they arise among those they supervise.

**Administrative Prioritization Project**

In the spring of 2014, the Ombuds Office participated in the Administrative Prioritization Project initiated by the Board of Regents. Although areas for improvement were identified, the conclusion of the review was that the Ombuds Office is “performing consistent with expectations” and both “Program Quality” and “Cost Effectiveness and Efficiency” were rated highly.

**Observations and Recommendations**

1. Many academic administrators (especially department chairs) often find themselves in the uncomfortable position of fielding complaints from students, staff, and faculty about allegedly bad behavior of their faculty colleagues. Some chairs believe individuals should simply “work things out” on their own and don’t investigate strategies for dealing with conflict and inappropriate conduct. Over the past five years, both though the auspices of the Office of Faculty Relations and the Leadership Education for Advancement and Promotion (LEAP) program, more
workshops have been offered to assist chairs in improving their skills and expanding their strategies for dealing with these kinds of concerns. We believe the need to continue and, if possible, expand these workshop offerings seems overwhelmingly obvious.

**Recommendation:** Provide resources to help department chairs to obtain conflict management skills training and encourage the use of available campus resources (especially Faculty Ombuds) for assistance in dealing with the full range of conflict-related issues.

2. “Workplace bullying” has become an increasingly hot topic on many university campuses. There is no commonly agreed upon definition of the behaviors involved in this phenomenon. A few universities in the US (and many others internationally) have developed anti-bullying policies. These include: Oregon State University ([http://oregonstate.edu/oei/bullying-policy](http://oregonstate.edu/oei/bullying-policy)), the University of New Mexico ([http://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2240.html](http://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2240.html)), and the University of South Carolina ([http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/acaf180.pdf](http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/acaf180.pdf)). Any such policy would need to clearly define “workplace bullying” to assist individuals in clarifying problem behavior so they can focus on options best suited to the issue. This would also help minimize over use of “bullying” accusations, which tend to escalate conflict. It would also help ensure that when actual bullying does occur, the significant harms that it causes (research suggests harms are likely more frequent and more significant that the harms suffered by victims of sexual harassment) can be appropriately addressed. And, a policy would need to define a procedure for formally investigating such claims, and protect the rights of all parties involved (including academic freedom). Policies about harassment and discrimination followed by appropriate training have educated members of the campus community about this topic and provided a formal mechanism for dealing with these problems when they occur. We believe a similar policy and training about workplace bullying could have a similar impact on that problem.

**Recommendation:** Engage all stakeholders (faculty, staff, and students) in discussions about whether and/or how to implement a university policy clearly defining and prohibiting “workplace bullying.”

3. A few times academic departments have asked for assistance in facilitating group discussions about potentially or actually divisive issues. Preparing for these discussions almost always involves individual meetings with faculty members and at least one or more meetings with chairs. But, our Faculty Ombuds (who have most frequently received this request) are only employed 30% of the time during the academic year. Depending on when such requests are made (and on the rest of their workload), they may or may not always be available to provide this assistance.

**Recommendation:** In order to support unit facilitations about communication protocols, ethical standards/expectations, and professional responsibilities regarding academic freedom, etc., set aside additional money so it will be available if needed to:

a) Increase the percent time appointments or the number of Faculty Ombuds.

b) Make use of the Ombuds Office’s rich network of contacts to hire dispute resolution professionals from the Boulder and Denver region on a contract basis.
New Initiatives for 2014-2015


2. Recruit and hire a new Faculty Ombuds to serve in the position currently held by Emily Calhoun, as Professor Calhoun plans to retire after the end of the spring 2015 semester.

3. Collaborate with Faculty and Staff Assistance Program staff to present one or more workshops incorporating the topic of emotional self-management with conflict-related skills and strategies.

4. Explore options to gather better (i.e., more reliable and valid) evaluation and outcome data from users of the Ombuds Office about their experiences with the office.

5. Further develop an integrated communication strategy, including a more robust online presence (e.g., more video and audio clips, new constituent-specific marketing materials and an increased social media presence to increase visibility on campus.

6. Work with individuals from Faculty Affairs and the Office of University Counsel to identify questions for a BFA committee to address in order to improve the BFA Professional Rights and Duties document.

7. Explore how and whether we might best respond to concerns and requests for Ombuds services by System employees at the University.

8. Work with the Office of University Counsel and others to explore feasibility of developing a workplace bullying policy at the University of Colorado Boulder.

9. Increase outreach efforts to campus administrators to better understand their current and anticipated challenges and to remind them of our availability to assist with conflict-related matters in their areas of responsibility.

10. The Associate Ombuds will:

   a. Serve on IOA ad hoc Title IX committee to: 1) help assess the state of affairs for academic ombuds as it relates to confidentiality and Title IX; (2) develop recommendations with respect to Title IX policy, laws, and regulations as it pertains to the academic ombuds, including but not limited to the designation of the ombuds as a confidential resource, and implications for (protection from) liability of educational
institutions; (3) share recommendations with the White House Task Force, DOE and OCR; (4) remain actively engaged in the debates that follow on these issues;

b. Serve on IOA Task Force to review options for resolving concerns about membership category criteria; and

c. Complete final steps to receive designation as a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP).

11. The Director will:

a. Assist the new Ombudsman at Stanford University Medical School in utilizing the Conflict Communication Protocol materials for working with groups there;

b. Present two half-day professional development workshops (“A Workshop for Supervisors: Dealing with Conflict Among or Between Your Direct Reports” and “Promoting a Respectful Workplace”) for the International Ombudsman Association;


d. Make a presentation at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA on “Conflict Resolution Day” (October 16, 2015)

e. Assist ombuds colleagues from the US Department of Interior in Washington, D.C., the Baker Hughes Corporation in Texas, and United Health Services Hospital in Rochester, New York in using the “Conflict Communication Protocols” activity with groups in their workplaces.

In Closing . . .

The Ombuds Office staff has no authority to investigate or sanction anyone. So, we start with the assumption that the issues visitors present to us are ones they honestly believe to be problems worthy of discussing with someone. The number of referrals and requests for Ombuds Office assistance, and the responsiveness from members of the university community we contact suggest the Ombuds Office enjoys a favorable reputation on campus. Services benefit many individuals and the work appears to improve the climate of the university in numerous ways each year. If the Ombuds Office did not exist, it is likely that many more people would try to involve administrators and/or use formal options to address their concerns. Some problems would likely fester and might erupt in unexpected and potentially destructive (maybe even embarrassing) ways. The university gains much good will by providing Ombuds Office services to help individuals informally manage and resolve interpersonal and administrative problems. The continuing support of the Office of the Provost in performing this challenging – and rewarding - work is enormously appreciated.
Appendix A

Outreach:

The Ombuds Office had 1516 contacts via outreach activities in 2013-2014. These activities include workshops, lectures, and presentations for faculty, staff, and students about various conflict-related topics. It also includes participation in various fairs for particular constituents (e.g., RA’s, parents, new faculty). These are proactive efforts designed to assist participants in learning about conflict generally and often, to learn conflict-related skills. All of these efforts promote awareness of Ombuds Office services. In fact, many workshop participants make appointments later to visit the office or refer others to do so. And, hopefully, the workshops provide valuable tools to help constituents better manage their own conflicts.

FY 2014 Outreach by the Ombuds Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>#</th>
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<td>Leadership Retreat - Managing Conflict</td>
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<td>VC for AA/Provost</td>
<td>Roundtable for Academic Administrators</td>
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Total 1547

**FY 14 OED Workshops**

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Total OED 99

*Attendees at OED workshops involved people from all admin areas.
Number of Events by Administrative Area

- Chancellor
- Senior VC and CFO
- VC for Academic Affairs and Provost
- VC for Administration

Number of Attendees by Administrative Area

- Chancellor
- Senior VC and CFO
- VC for Academic Affairs and Provost
- VC for Administration
- VC for Research

OED Workshops

- Respectful Workplace
- Conflict and Direct Reports
- Highly Effective Manager
Appendix B

International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Categories:

**Compensation & Benefits:** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.

**Evaluative Relationships:** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)

**Peer and Colleague Relationships:** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory–employee or student–professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)

**Career Progression and Development:** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)

**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.

**Safety, Health, and Physical Environment:** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

**Services/Administrative Issues:** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

**Organizational, Strategic, and Mission-Related:** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

**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.
Appendix C

2013-2014 Contributions to the Organizational Ombudsman Profession

The Director of the Ombuds Office:

1) . . . Gave a keynote address at the April 2014 International Ombudsman Association (IOA) annual conference in Denver, CO. The title of his address was, *An Ombuds Journey from “Should I Stay or Should I Go” to “My Hometown.”* (available as DVD upon request)

2) . . . Presented a workshop called “Promoting a Respectful Workplace” at the IOA Annual Conference, which was recorded and is available for purchase at the IOA website ([http://www.ombudsassociation.org/Conferences-Professional-Development/Webinars/2014-Annual-Conference-Recordings.aspx](http://www.ombudsassociation.org/Conferences-Professional-Development/Webinars/2014-Annual-Conference-Recordings.aspx)).

3) . . . Was the subject of interview on “IOA Radio” on May 28th. His topic was “Our Need to Clarify Advocating for a Fair Process.” This interview is available for members only on the IOA website. For more information see: [http://www.ombudsassociation.org/Conferences-Professional-Development/IOA-Radio.aspx](http://www.ombudsassociation.org/Conferences-Professional-Development/IOA-Radio.aspx).

4) . . . Learned from the Editor of the online journal, Mediate.com on January 15, 2014 that his 2002 article “Preparing for Your Mediation,” ([http://www.mediate.com/articles/sebokt.cfm](http://www.mediate.com/articles/sebokt.cfm)) was “. . . the 48th highest page views of ALL PAGES (includes all Articles and lots more) at Mediate.com. There are currently 10,558 Articles at Mediate.com.” (James Melamed, personal correspondence, 1/15/14)