Ombuds Office 2001-2002 Annual Report

Ombuds Office Contacts with Members of the Campus Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituents</th>
<th>01-02</th>
<th>00-01</th>
<th>99-00</th>
<th>98-99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>389</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>185</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>609</td>
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What the Numbers Mean:

The numbers above represent the total “headcount” for members of the campus community with whom we had significant contact in 01-02. Most initiated contact with us through office visits. Some occurred on the telephone. And some were people to whom we offered assistance or initiated a request for their help in resolving a concern. The total number is 103 more than the highest number in our history.

Most Common Reasons for Seeking Ombuds Office Assistance

Faculty
1. Workplace Conflict
2. Benefits
3. Diversity-Related Issues

Students
1. Restorative Justice Issues
2. Academic Policies/Procedures
3. Policy Violations
4. Administrative Policies/Procedures

Staff
1. Workplace Conflict
2. Administrative Policies/Procedures
3. Diversity-Related Conflicts

Assistance Provided to Ombuds Office Visitors

1. Consultations (listening, reviewing options, providing information, and coaching on collaborative strategies)
2. Referral (to other or additional offices or services)
3. Mediation or Group Facilitation (mediation usually involved two individuals, facilitation involved three or more)

Evaluation of the Ombuds Office by Visitors

Users of the Ombuds Office who make appointments are given a packet of information when they arrive for their appointments. In addition to information about the Ombuds Office, the packet includes an evaluation form and return mailing envelope which they may return after their appointments. Those who provided feedback overwhelmingly indicated that they appreciate how they were treated by Ombuds Office staff and that they had a positive experience with the office. On a 1 – 5 rating scale, with 5 representing “strongly agree,” the average “overall satisfaction” rating was 4.71. Twenty-three (23) out of 28 respondents rated their overall satisfaction at a perfect 5.
Trends and Recommendations

1. **Trend Observed:** In grading disputes between faculty and students, there is no formal process where students can have their concerns evaluated by anyone other than the faculty member they believe is treating them unfairly. The only administrative option students are given in this situation is to speak to Department Chairs, who students often perceive as biased in favor of faculty. This also creates an uncomfortable situation for Chairs, who may, in fact, hesitate to question the actions of their faculty colleagues. The lack of any process to investigate or evaluate these allegations—even allegedly egregious ones—signals students that the University is not concerned with their being treated fairly. In essence, students in this situation are charging faculty with cheating them. The lack of any process to review these allegations stands in stark contrast to how students accused of academic misconduct are treated by the University.

   **Recommendation:** Consider implementing the kind of campus-wide grade appeal procedures that, according to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, exist at about half of our peer institutions. A variation of this would be to require that grade appeal policies and procedures be adopted by each College and School. Include both faculty and student stakeholders in the investigation of establishing such a policy and procedure.

2. **Trend Observed:** A significant number of students in 01-02 complained about the way the University’s “Three Strikes and You’re Out” policy is being administered. There was a common expression of concern about an apparent “guilty until proven innocent” attitude on the part of RA staff, in particular. A number of students complained about receiving “strikes” in situations where they were not even consuming alcohol but were present in a room where alcohol was being consumed. This rigid approach to enforcement has created much backlash against RA’s and does not appear to be helping students learn much more than to be sneaker in the future.

   **Recommendation:** Review how well the “Three Strikes...” policy is really working and consider adopting a more restorative approach to dealing with alcohol violations. To the extent possible, find ways to differentiate students with alcohol problems from those who do not have problems. Develop criteria for judging “extenuating circumstances” (e.g., letters from fellow residents, student history, consider safety issues).

3. **Trend Observed:** A number of employees indicated that their supervisors treated them in an intimidating or bullying manner. Others said supervisors were still using “top-down management practices” which gave them little or no input into departmental decisions. When asked by employees about these practices, some supervisors said employees who were unhappy were welcome to leave.

   **Recommendation:** Promote the use of “Exit Interviews” for faculty and staff who leave (or transfer from) their positions and develop and encourage (or even require) use of a 360° evaluation process for all staff at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Ombuds Office Outreach Activities

**Definition:** “Outreach Activities” include workshops, training, and professional development activities given by Ombuds Office staff members related to conflict management or promoting understanding of the role of the Ombuds Office.

**Rationale:** Outreach activities increase the visibility of the Ombuds Office. In addition, most of these activities are proactive attempts to assist members of the campus community in learning concepts and/or skills related to effective strategies for managing conflict or enhance their understanding of conflict-related issues involving diversity.

**Some Highlights:** 13 New Employee Orientation presentation
8 all-day Conflict Management presentations for ITS (collaboration w/ OED)

7 presentations for Residence Hall Staff

6 In-Service trainings and two-day weekend training for Restorative Justice facilitators)

5 Conflict Management presentations for OED (Supervision, Leadership Forum, and University Perspective)

2 workshops on “Conflicting Through Differences” (collaboration w/ Dir. Of Counseling and Psychological Services Center)

2 workshops on “Applying Principled Negotiation in the Workplace”

2 reports to Faculty (one to BFA, one to Retired Faculty Assn.)

Additional Presentations to Graduate Women Forum, UGGS, and Graduate Teacher Program

Number of Outreach Activities: 68
Number of Participants: nearly 1300
Workshop Evaluations for OED Classes: 5.19 on a 1 - 6 scale (6 is the highest possible rating).
Other Ombuds Office workshops: 4.51 on a 1 – 5 scale (5 is the highest possible rating).

**Other Accomplishments in 01-02**

- Completed a comprehensive evaluation (including peer evaluation and visitor evaluation) for Faculty Ombuds. Both remaining Faculty Ombuds received Outstanding overall ratings.

- Initiated an Ombuds Office marketing effort to increase student use of the Ombuds Office after consulting with professionals from University Communications. This appears to have resulted in a significant increase in student use of the office (student use of the office increased from 192 in 00-01 to 389 in 01-02)

- Served as member of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee for Minority Affairs.

- Served on Critical Incident Response Network

- Completed move of Faculty Ombuds program (twice)

- Co-Published (with Ombuds from the University of Denver) a journal article called “Orienting the New College or University Ombuds” in the Journal of the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds (November 2001)

- Organized and presented a Pre-Conference Workshop at the first Joint Conference of The University and College Ombuds Association (UCOA) and The Ombudsman Association (TOA) on “When the Same Does Not Equal Fair” in Arlington, VA (May 2002)

- Served as a member of the Editorial Board for the Journal of the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds

- Maintained the web page and listserv for the University and College Ombuds Association (http://www.Colorado.edu/Ombuds/UCOA and ucoanet@lists.colorado.edu)
• Served as Mentors in the University and College Ombuds Association Mentoring Program for three new ombuds at other universities (TS and MC)

• Served on TOA-UCOA Joint Oversight Committee and took an active role at the Joint Conference Plenary Session in helping facilitate dialogue among members of both associations related to plans for these organizations to work more collaboratively and possibly merge into a single professional organization.

• Served on the Nominations and Bylaws Committees for the University and College Ombuds Association

**Future Initiatives**

• Serve on CU Dialogue Network
• Pursue grant funding options for the Restorative Justice program
• Continue Ombuds Office Marketing Activities established in 00-01
• Continue professional development activities for all ombuds (conferences, workshops, training)
• Continue consultation with other universities considering establishing Ombuds Offices and/or Restorative Justice programs
• Revitalize the Campus Observer Program
• Revise our evaluation form to include a much smaller number of questions