Ombuds Office 2002-2003 Annual Report

Ombuds Office Contacts with Members of the Campus Community

Constituents

Students 172
Faculty 146
Staff 316
Other 77

Total 711

What the Numbers Mean:
The numbers above represent the total “headcount” for members of the campus community with whom we had significant contact in 02-03. 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.

Most Common Reasons for Seeking Ombuds Office Assistance*

Faculty
1. Workplace Conflict
2. Administrative Policies/Procedures
3. Academic Policies/Procedures

Students
1. Academic Policies/Procedures
2. Administrative Policies/Procedures
3. Instructor-Student Dispute

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

Definitions of Most Common Categories:

Workplace Conflict
Any disputes between people in the workplace, whether or not they are work-related.
Do not check this category if issue is solely related to a policy violation (e.g., sexual harassment, research misconduct) or if the concern only involves supervisor-employee evaluation concerns.

Includes:

Discipline or corrective actions
Grievances
Hiring & termination
Disputes between faculty colleagues
Disputes between co-workers
Disputes between supervisor and employee(s)
Student worker disputes
Departmental problems
Administrative—Policy, Procedures, Decisions, Actions
Concerns related to non-academic bureaucratic systems for students, staff, and faculty.
Includes:
- Admissions
- Bursars
- Financial Aid
- Human Resources
- Parking
- Tuition Classification

Academic—Policy, Procedures, Decisions, Actions
Concerns about policies or procedures relating to the student academic progress.
Includes:
- Advising
- Petitions regarding grade changes or withdrawals
  (e.g., “F” to “W”—not grading disputes with professor)
- Transfer of academic credit
- Re-admission, suspension, or probationary policies related to academic standing

Instructor-Student Disputes
Faculty/instructors/TAs concerned about student conduct either in or outside the classroom. Students’ complaints about professors’ behaviors in the classroom or their teaching. Also includes graduate students’ disputes with advisors. Any interpersonal conflict between a faculty member and a student.

Diversity-Related Issue
Any concern related to concerns based on target/protected class category. This category also includes consultations about diversity issues such as how to be more inclusive, how to work with privilege, or working within a multicultural community, etc. This category is not checked if the visitor is in a target/protected class but the issue about which s/he contacted the Ombuds Office is completely unrelated to her/his membership in this class.

Most Common Forms of Assistance Provided to Ombuds Office Visitors

1. Individual Consultations
   This category is used to indicate that we consulted with visitors to identify their interests, consider their goals, options, and potential strategies. Our assistance in this category often includes conflict coaching regarding how they might raise difficult issues, approach others, attempt to gain cooperation, etc.

2. Referral
   Referred to another on-campus or off-campus resource for primary or additional assistance. When this category is checked, an Individual Consultation is assumed to have occurred, as well.

3. Mediation or Group Facilitation
   This can be selected to indicate that we did a structured mediation between two parties. This requires separate meetings with all disputing parties prior to mediation session(s). Typically, it takes two or three mediation sessions to reach resolution on issues.
   It can also be selected to indicate that we facilitated between two or more parties where a neutral third-party facilitator is requested. It includes facilitation of group discussions, retreats, general meetings.
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 4.7.

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. Many students interpret the lack of any process to investigate or evaluate these allegations – even allegedly egregious ones – as evidence 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, exists 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:** There is a wide variance in the availability and procedures regarding translation services for ESL employees. There is also an apparent lack of understanding of the dual roles issues which can arise when supervisors are asked to be translators for employees with whom they are in conflict (or when they are perceived by ESL employees to be allies of the ESL employee’s supervisor).

   **Recommendation:** Make translation services easily available for all ESL staff – without requiring ESL employees to pay for the services. Services should protect the privacy of the ESL employee and be provided by competent translators who are not a part of her/his work unit. Develop the expectation by all supervisors that translation services will be routinely provided so the onus for requesting services does not fall on the ESL employee.

3. **Trend Observed:** A number of employees continued to indicate 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:** Since we now have an exit interview process in place for faculty and staff who leave (or transfer from) their positions, encourage its use. Also, encourage University administrators to learn to recognize – and address - bullying in the workplace, especially among supervisors who report to them.

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:

10 New Employee Orientation presentations
4 half-day Resolving Conflict presentations to UMC Staff
4 presentations for Residence Hall Staff
1 In-Service trainings and two-day weekend training for Restorative Justice facilitators
4 Conflict Management presentations for OED (Supervision, Leadership Forum, and University Perspective)
1 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: 43
Number of Participants: 1063
Workshop Evaluations for OED Classes: 5.07 on a 1 - 6 scale (6 is the highest possible rating)
Other Workshop Evaluations: on a 1 – 5 scale (5 is the highest possible rating)


Mary Chavez was named President-Elect of the University and College Ombuds Assn.
2003 UCOA Conference (Tom, Mary, Andrea, and Bob)
Legal Issues for University and College Ombuds (Tom, Mary)
Intellectual Property and Ombudsing (Bob)
Transformative Mediation (Tom, Mary, Andrea, Bob, and Jack)
2002 California Caucus of College and University Ombuds Conference (Mary)
CNCR Symposium on the Future of Conflict Resolution in Education (Tom)
High School to College Mediator Bridge Project (TS)

Other Accomplishments in 2002-2003

- Elected President-Elect for University and College Ombuds Association (MC-R)
- Served as member of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee for Minority Affairs (TS)
- Served as a member of the Chancellor’s Committee for Women (MC-R)
- Served as a member of the Critical Incident Response Network (AL)
- Served as a member of the Editorial Board for the Journal of the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds (TS)
- Moved and supervise the web page and listserv for the University and College Ombuds Association (TS)
- Served as Mentors in the University and College Ombuds Association Mentoring Program for three new ombuds at other universities (TS and MC)
• Published article for the “Ombuds News” (UCOA Newsletter)
• Served on CU Dialogue Network
• Co-organized/hosted with the Colorado Ombuds Network, the annual University and College Ombuds Association conference in Denver, Colorado.
• UCOA 2003 Conference Presentations made by UCB Ombuds Office Staff:
  
  Mary Chavez: *Appreciative Inquiry for Ombudspersons*. (Co-Presented with Laurie McCann, University of California at Santa Cruz)

  Mary Chavez and Tom Sebok: *Bullying in the Workplace* (Co-Presented with Carolyn Noorbakhsh, Ombudsman at Coors Brewing Company)

  Andrea Larson: *Is Counting Enough? Demonstrating the Value of the Ombuds Office* (Co-Presented with Roberta Steinhardt, UCHSC)

  Tom Sebok: *Living Up to Our SOP’s: Applications in Real-Time Ombudsmanship*. (Co-Presented with Mary Lou Fenili, UCD)

  **Future Initiatives**

  • Co-Chair the Joint Conference Committee for the 2004 UCOA-TOA Conference (MC-R)
  • Serve on the Board of the University and College Ombuds Association (MC-R)
  • Continue professional development activities for all ombuds (conferences, workshops, training)
  • Continue consultation with other universities considering establishing Ombuds Offices and/or Restorative Justice programs (TS)
  • Publish chapter and case studies for two books on Restorative Justice in Higher Education (TS)
  • Present Restorative Justice workshop at ASJA conference in February 2004 (TS)
  • Chair the Joint TOA-UCOA Database Task Force (TS)
  • Serve on the UCOA Professional Development Committee (TS)
  • Co-Chair the TOA-UCOA Joint Conference Communication Committee (TS)
  • Attend CDR Executive Coaching Training (TS, MC-R, JK)
  • Publish article on Ombuds Office and Restorative Justice Program on Ohio Commission for Dispute Resolution website (TS)
  • Further develop “Self-Help” section of Ombuds Office website (TS)