

University of Georgia

(<http://uga.edu/ombudsperson/index.html>)

Advocates for fairness

The University of Georgia Ombudspersons are designated individuals who serve as independent, neutral, and informal resources for UGA students, faculty, and staff. Rather than serving as advocates for individual members of the University community, these individuals are advocates for fairness, and they function as a source of information and referral. They assist, to the extent possible, in informally resolving concerns brought to their attention. They serve as third-party information providers who remain neutral while assisting individuals in having their concerns addressed through appropriate channels, including those related to discrimination and harassment.

Ombudspersons supplement, but do not replace, the University's existing policies and procedures for processing and resolving student, faculty, and staff complaints and grievances. Ombudspersons also do not have direct responsibility for specific administrative processes and procedures. Rather, these individuals provide information and assistance regarding administrative processes and may serve as additional avenues for resolving the concerns of students, faculty, and staff.

More specifically, an Ombudsperson:

- Facilitates communication among relevant parties, acting as a neutral agent;
- Assists in the evaluation of allegations, disputes or concerns, and whether a matter can be resolved informally or requires more formal consideration;
- Informs members of the University community of existing University resources and procedures for addressing particular concerns presented, whether or not the Ombudsperson becomes directly involved in the efforts at resolution;
- Facilitates the expeditious resolution of concerns;
- Keeps the concerned parties informed of the progress of any informal measures that the Ombudsperson takes in endeavoring to resolve the issue presented;
- Recommends to University officials changes to existing policies or procedures that the Ombudsperson deems appropriate;
- Promotes and adheres to the values of fairness, equity, justice and mutual respect at all times.

All communications related to an allegation, concern or other issue reported to Ombudspersons will be kept confidential to the extent legally permissible and consistent with maintaining the safety and public welfare of the campus. In cases where information reported to an Ombudsperson indicates that there may be a violation of the [University's non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy \[pdf\]](#), the Ombudsperson will be obligated to report that information to the NDAH Officer in keeping with that policy.

The Student, Faculty, and Staff Ombudspersons will provide information annually to the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO) for an annual report, due September 1, to be submitted by EOO to the President, the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost and the Chair of the Executive Committee of the University Council. The report will discuss trends or patterns in the reporting of issues and concerns by students, faculty and staff and will make recommendations for changes or improvements to existing policies and procedures.

University of California – Berkeley

(<http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/committees/omb/faculty-ombudsperson>)

The Faculty Ombudsperson is a confidential, informal, impartial alternative for the resolution of work-related problems and conflicts. Members of this committee, acting as individuals, are available to Senate members and staff members in the academic series. The latter may also go to the Staff Ombudsperson (642-7823), who has much more expertise in matters of personnel policy, both union and non-union contract issues, and legal matters.

The Faculty Ombudspersons function as classical "organizational ombudspersons," solving problems and disputes in a confidential and informal manner. They listen, suggest, investigate, and mediate to achieve problem resolution. Often they satisfy the needs of the complainant by simply acting as a sounding board and source of advice as to how that person may solve his/her own problem. It is the objective of the ombudsperson to get all parties to act collegially and according to their responsibilities. All proceedings remain confidential. Ombudspersons do not issue reports or findings. They do not keep written records or act as witnesses in possible subsequent proceedings. They subscribe to a code of conduct, assuring impartiality and confidentiality.

The process begins with the complainant contacting a Faculty Ombudsperson (usually the chair who will direct the caller to the appropriate member). After a phone call or brief meeting, a discussion is held concerning possible courses of action. All actions are strictly confidential and, unless at the request of the complainant, no action is taken. The ombudsperson may also advise the complainant that they he/she has no basis for a complaint and decline to proceed further. Often, at the request of the complainant, the ombudsperson contacts the faculty member or member of the administration that is in a position to solve the problem and, if necessary, arranges a meeting to discuss the issues. It is our experience that most members of the University community respond positively to the ombudspersons' suggestions and that the majority of disputes can be resolved informally.

University of Virginia

(<http://www.virginia.edu/ombudsman/services.html>)

What Services does the Ombudsman Provide?

The Ombudsman will:

- Listen to you and discuss your problems/concerns, identifying and evaluating with you options to resolve problems.
- Provide information on resources within the University that may help you.
- Open avenues of communication, investigate complaints, and gather information.
- Serve as a neutral party to solve problems and resolve conflict. The Ombudsman does not take sides, but works to achieve fair outcomes.
- Identify problem areas facing faculty, staff, and students, and recommend changes in University policies and procedures.

The Ombudsman can provide coaching; shuttle diplomacy; generic solutions (meaning a solution which protects the identity of one individual by applying it to a group); mediation for conflicts; track problem areas; provide options to whistleblowers or members of the organization with ethics concerns; and make recommendations for changes to policies or procedures in support of orderly system change.

In accordance with the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) "standards of practice," the University Ombudsman is neutral and operates outside of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman practices informally, with no management decision-making power and without accepting "notice" for the University. The Ombudsman typically keeps no case records and keeps confidentiality to the extent permitted by law. An exception occurs when there appears to be an imminent risk of serious harm to a person, and the Ombudsman can see no responsible option other than breaking confidence. Note, however, that the Ombudsman can almost always find "other responsible options," such as helping a visitor make an anonymous report about whatever appears to be the problem.

University of Michigan

(<http://www.provost.umich.edu/faculty/handbook/10/10.D.html>)

The University of Michigan Faculty Handbook

10.D Faculty Ombuds Program

A faculty ombuds is to provide impartial information and informal, confidential assistance to faculty. Most collegiate units on the Ann Arbor Campus have a faculty ombuds who has either been appointed or elected to that position. The University Faculty Ombuds position has also been created (Section 10.E, "University Faculty Ombuds.") The primary function of a faculty ombuds is to protect the interests and rights of faculty and unit administrators from injustices or abuses of discretion; from unnecessary delay and complication when units administrator rules and regulations; and from inconsistency, unresponsiveness, and discrimination at all levels of the University's operations and programs. The position of ombuds exists to help increase the probability that satisfactory and just resolutions can be reached informally and to reduce the likelihood that difficult situations might lead to formal grievances. The ombuds does not replace or supersede other regular University grievance/appeal procedures but supplements and enhances them. The ombuds is not an advocate for individuals but rather encourages practices that are fair, just, and respectful. The ombuds considers the rights and interests of individuals, as well as the institution.

The Faculty Ombuds Program is coordinated by the Faculty Senate Office at 6048 Fleming Administration Building, <sacua@umich.edu>, phone (764-0303).

For more complete information and the names of the unit ombuds, view <www.umich.edu/~facombud>, representative in attendance

University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

(<http://www.ombuds.unc.edu/policies.html>)

Professional Standards

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's ombuds officers follow the ethical guidelines and standards of practice of The International Ombudsman Association.

Standards of Practice

The University Ombuds is guided by the principles developed by the leading international professional associations of ombuds.

- The International Ombudsman Association's Code of Ethics
 - PDF
- The International Ombudsman Association's Standards of Practice
 - PDF