

Update on Proposed Ombud's Position

Faculty Senate

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What is an Ombud/ Ombudsman/Ombudsperson?

Purpose: to provide faculty (and potentially other employees)

- A confidential and independent source for discussion of workplace questions, issues, concerns, conflicts, or disputes
- Information on potential methods of resolution, including information on university policies, processes and procedures to assist in the resolution of conflicts

“Ombud Group”

- Group convened by Provost Nielsen in 2008 to discuss the appropriateness of an Ombud’s Office at NC State
- Members (since 2008): Jim Martin, Barclay Poling, Margery Overton, Barbara Carroll, Marc Okner, Mary Beth Kurz, David Drooz, Joanne Woodard, Katie Perry, Betsy Brown, Larry Nielsen, Warwick Arden
- Conducted extensive research on Ombud positions
- Meets periodically to discuss position and appointment

Standards for Effective Ombud's Office

Source: International Ombudsman Association "Standards of Practice"
and descriptions of offices at other universities (www.ombudsassociation.org)

- Confidentiality (within limits of state statutes)
- Independence
- Impartiality
- Informality

Roles of the Ombud

- Consult with faculty members about concerns related to their work environment
- Listen, help “reality-check” perceived concerns, and offer unbiased feedback
- Explain options available to faculty members through university processes or resources (such as Faculty Assistance Program, Employee Relations, Mediation, Grievance Process, Office of Equal Opportunity)
- Make suggestions to the Chancellor and other university administrators about improvements in campus policies and practices

Roles the Ombud Does Not Play

- Participate in the grievance process (although may refer faculty to the process and serve as a information resource to the University on dispute resolution and conflict management)
- Conduct formal investigations
- Serve as an advocate on behalf of any party
- Offer legal advice or psychological counseling
- Offer mediation or arbitration services
- Enforce or modify policies, regulations or rules

Limitations of the Ombud's Role

- Using Ombud's services is strictly voluntary
- Ombud's communications are considered privileged
- Does not formally receive reports of possible violations of law or policy on behalf of the University
- May disclose limited information if he/she determines a threat to safety is imminent
- May discontinue providing services to an individual at his/her discretion
- Does not report to any institutional administrative, compliance or governance office or function

Proposed Ombud Position: Qualifications

- Active member of the tenured faculty, faculty member on phased retirement, or a retired member of the tenured faculty
- Current knowledge and understanding of applicable University policies, processes, and procedures and complexity and diversity of the institution
- Effective communication skills
- Ability to be objective and balanced
- Will complete formal training through an appropriate professional organization such as IOA

Proposed Ombud Position: Appointment

- Appointed by and serves at the will of the Chancellor
- Report to Chancellor or Provost (cf. Internal Audit)
- Initial appointment up to 2 years, renewable if deemed appropriate and desirable by the Chancellor
- Equivalent of a .50 FTE commitment plus some summer support
- Designated private meeting space on campus

Proposed Ombud Position: Status

- On hold due to budget restrictions
- Ombud's Group will continue to meet periodically
- Add new members as appropriate (e.g., General Counsel Eileen Goldgeier)
- Receive feedback from campus on the need for and nature of the position

Questions?