Grinnell College
Ombuds Office
Annual Report
2013 - 2014

Chinyere Ukabiala, Ombuds
Joe Rosenfield Center 311
1115 Eighth Avenue
Grinnell, Iowa 50112
641-269-9399

ukabiala@grinnell.edu
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This report is a summary of the work of the Grinnell College’s Ombuds Office in its first year of operation. The Ombuds Office was established on February 2, 2013. The office is staffed by a full time Ombuds, Chinyere Ukabiala, presently without administrative support. The report provides information about the number of contacts the office has had with members of the campus community, and the number and types of issues presented, for which the Ombuds provided assistance. It also describes some of the trends the Ombuds has observed and offers a few recommendations. Finally, it will outline outreach and professional activities undertaken this year, name future initiatives, and discuss feedback provided by users of the office.

Overview

The Ombuds Office opened its doors to the Grinnell College community on February 2, 2013. The Ombuds Office began meeting with visitors from the first day the office opened. The office interacted with a total of 210 visitors in its first year, made presentations to several departments, facilitated group mediations, and inter-person mediations, attended a variety of committee meetings, served on the Disability Discrimination Committee, and provided conflict management trainings to groups and individuals. The Ombuds also met individually with several community members in leadership positions, including; Vice Presidents, Administrators, Directors, Deans and Chairs of Departments. The Ombuds participated in several training programs – The International Ombudsman Association foundation courses for new ombuds, the Academic Ombuds trainings for College and University Ombuds, the Iowa Association of Mediators summer training (held on Grinnell College Campus), Accessibility in Higher Education, the American Bar Association Seminar on Ethical tools to diffuse Incivility, Email and Conflict Seminar, and a Restorative Justice workshop.

Role of the Ombuds Office:

The Ombuds Office assists faculty, students, staff, administrators, and parents in managing and resolving campus-related conflicts, complaints and disputes. The office utilizes alternative methods of dispute resolution to work with individuals experiencing conflict with other members of the campus community, and people with academic or administrative issues, concerns, or questions. The idea for an Ombuds Office at Grinnell is not that the office should be a place people go to gripe and whine. Rather it is a place where the community can come to share their concerns, and receive constructive assistance. People bring issues that are often sensitive in nature to the Ombuds. They are looking for a safe space to share their concerns and need to hear that what is communicated in the Ombuds Office stays in the Ombuds Office. This is what sets the Ombuds Office apart from other offices on campus. The office provides informal conflict management services, and advocates for fair treatment and fair process.
**Relevant Professional Standards:**

The umbrella organization for the Ombuds profession is the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), which publishes a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. Additional guidance for the establishment and operation of an Ombuds Office has been published by the American Bar Association (ABA) and IOA. The ethical tenets of the Ombuds practice are:

*Confidentiality* – The Ombuds does not keep records for the College, and will not disclose the names or concerns of visitors, without permission. (The only exception is when the Ombuds believes there is an imminent risk of physical harm.) The Ombuds Office thus is not an office of notice for the College.

*Neutrality* – The Ombuds is respectfully impartial with all parties to a conflict. The Ombuds does not take sides in any dispute, but rather advocates for fair process and equitable results.

*Informality* – The Ombuds listens, offers information about college policies, procedures and resources, and presents a range of options for resolving problems. With permission, the Ombuds will facilitate communication or mediate a dispute. The Ombuds does not arbitrate, adjudicate or participate in formal procedures.

*Independence* – To ensure objectivity, the Ombuds is not aligned with any administrative unit or office, and reports directly to the President for administrative and budgetary purposes.

These ethical tenets are absolute and non-negotiable, and belong to the Ombuds Office rather than the visitor.

**DATA COLLECTION**

*Type of Data reported:*

A goal of this annual report is to review the overall activity of the Ombuds Office, while at the same time maintaining the confidentiality of the visitors to the office and the issues they presented. This report therefore provides general data about the number of cases, the type of visitors who sought assistance from the Ombuds Office, and the variety of issues that were of concern to visitors. A visitor is someone who visits the Office of the Ombuds and may be a student, staff, faculty, administrator, but can also include a parent or other non-Grinnell College persons as well.

*Scope of Data Reported:*

This Report discusses approximately one year of Ombuds Office activity and data, from February 2, 2013 through January 31, 2014. Two hundred and ten (210) visitors contacted the Ombuds Office during this period. When a visitor comes to the office with a concern, this is considered to be a case. There are occasions when a visitor may come to the office on more than one occasion and present a different set of concerns. In that situation, this would
constitute a separate case. Although visitors may raise many issues in discussions, only the issues for which options are discussed with them are counted. Also, while the Ombuds Office does not track this data, some people speak with the Ombuds more than one time about the same problem. Some speak with the Ombuds multiple times throughout the year about different problems. While most cases involved only two or three people, some involved as many as eight people. A case involving such a large number indicates that the Ombuds Office provided a structured mediation between parties or provided group facilitation. Mediation or facilitation requires separate meetings with each individual prior to mediation session(s). Typically, it takes two or three mediation sessions to reach resolution on issues. Facilitation is provided for group discussions, and other meetings to assist groups in identifying issues and making decisions.

**What is Not Counted:**

Routine inquiries (e.g., basic referrals, requests for telephone numbers, addresses of other offices, where certain policies can be found, etc.) are not counted.

**VISITOR CONCERNS**

The term ‘Visitor’ refers to individuals who approach the Ombuds Office with concerns, complaints or conflict situations. In some instances, the Ombuds worked one-on-one with the visitor through coaching or exploring and assessing options. But in most cases, the Ombuds worked with others in the institution to help resolve issues. Often, with the permission of the visitor. Much of the Ombuds work involves problem-solving and conflict management. Often, the Ombuds help visitors clarify the issues they bring to the Ombuds Office and identify options for dealing productively with those concerns. The Ombuds focuses on assisting the visitor in gaining perspective and developing skills to communicate and work more effectively with people in their unit or with other members of the college community.

Maintaining confidentiality is a key component of the Ombuds Office, the office therefore avoids maintaining any identifying information, or records of individuals visiting the office. Data regarding the number of visitors to the Ombuds Office, and the types of concerns they bring to the office is tracked in a non-identifying manner, and only for the purposes of assisting the individual and identifying concerns and trends. Charts below show that visitors represented virtually all levels of positions and all areas within the college community. Most visitors came from the ranks of non-management staff.
DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1: Constituent Contacts 2013 – 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituent</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constituent Contacts

- Faculty, 40, 19%
- Staff, 89, 43%
- Students, 65, 31%
- Administrators, 9, 4%
- Parents, 7, 3%
### Table 2: Issues: Reasons for Contact with the Ombuds Office in 2013 – 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compensation/Benefits</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Relationships</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Relationships</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career/Academic Progression</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/Regulatory/Financial/Compliance</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services/Administration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Issues</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Health/Environment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values/Ethics/Standards</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Issues</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Issues</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing the distribution of issues]

- **Compensation/Benefits**: 12, 4%
- **Evaluative Relationships**: 71, 24%
- **Peer Relationships**: 50, 17%
- **Career/Academic Progression**: 35, 12%
- **Legal/Regulatory/Financial/Compliance**: 15, 5%
- **Academic**: 12, 4%
- **Services/Administration**: 5, 2%
- **Organizational Issues**: 27, 9%
- **Safety/Health/Environment**: 21, 7%
- **Values/Ethics/Standards**: 29, 10%
- **Communication Issues**: 18, 6%
Codes Used For Visitor Concerns

The Ombuds Office uses the classification system developed in 2007 by the IOA to describe the reasons constituents have contact with any Organizational Ombuds Office. This system includes nine broad categories and approximately eighty-five sub categories which we use to classify the issues, questions, and concerns that lead to contact with any Organizational Ombuds Office. The Ombuds Office added two additional categories, to better reflect the concerns that were brought to the office this year, bringing the categories to a total of eleven broad categories. A description is attached as Appendix C. Although visitors generally raise several issues in discussions, only the issues for which options are discussed with them are counted.

OUTREACH & COLLABORATION

As the Ombuds Office is a new office at Grinnell College, the office on an ongoing basis, undertook extensive outreach efforts to ensure that the entire campus community is made aware of the existence of the Ombuds Office.

The majority of the campus community learned about the work of the Ombuds Office through the Open House held at the end of April 2013, announcing the opening of the Ombuds Office, informational tables at institutional events, brochures, posters, announcements, and the various presentations I offered across campus to virtually every office on campus. I spent the year making my rounds of campus and introducing myself to the campus community. I sat in on committee meetings, staff meetings and student meetings and attended a variety of campus functions. On an ongoing basis, I schedule routine meetings with several campus offices including the Presidents office, Student Affairs, Communications, ITS and Human Resources.

I introduced myself, and the functions of the Ombuds Office to various departments and made presentations on the functions and the role of the Ombuds Office to the various groups indicated in Appendix A. I made a concerted effort to make personal contact with a variety of administrators and departments, which resulted in opportunities to speak at several events on campus thereby raising the visibility of the Ombuds Office.

That said, my informal survey results indicate that most visitors seeking assistance from the Ombuds Office learn of the Ombuds Office through “word of mouth.” I purposely refrained from conducting a formal survey of visitors because some visitors were not completely convinced that their identity would not be revealed through a survey. As the Ombuds Office builds the requisite trust, I expect to institute formal surveys in the second year of operation. This will enable me present concrete feedback on the effectiveness of the Ombuds Office.

Outreach activities beyond the college include ongoing communication with other Ombudspersons throughout the state of Iowa and across the nation.
CAMPU
S CONCERNS

Although necessary, change is not always welcome. The Grinnell College community has experienced significant changes in a number of areas. During the first few months of establishing the Ombuds Program at Grinnell, some units experienced administrative changes which resulted in extra stressors on members of the campus community. The work of the Ombuds Office this past year, suggests the following broad areas of need:

- The need to improve communication overall
- The need for clarity in processes, policy and procedure, and increased integration and better coordination of functions between departments
- The need to discourage fear of reprisal

A recurring theme through consultations with visitors is the need for open communication and transparency. Many individuals feel uninformed or inadequately informed by administrators or department heads. Lack of clarity and transparency seem to feature prominently as a significant contributor to lack of trust and faith in the Institution. Individuals also express frustration about lack of knowledge or understanding of the management structure. When information is not openly or clearly communicated people turn to speculations and rumor. Keeping the community informed, especially during times of change is beneficial. When people are excluded, they feel uncertain and less likely to trust the administration. Conversely, when informed, the community becomes engaged stakeholders. They feel their contributions are valued and this boosts morale.

Individuals repeatedly expressed the need for clarity of process. Many are concerned with procedural fairness, and want to see a transparent well-described process for making decisions. – What is that process? Do those the decisions affect know and understand the process? Stakeholders feel excluded and believe important issues or viewpoints are ignored or unheard. As a result, decisions by administrators are seen as arbitrary. Making a commitment to procedural fairness an explicit goal for every department would be most beneficial. Inadequate training of some levels of supervisory staff may be a corollary to a seeming lack of process in some areas. Complaints from staff regarding supervisors or managers lacking in managerial skills suggests a need for increased training and support among staff in supervisory roles. The Ombuds Office is encouraging trainings specifically designed for new supervisors, as well as management training at all levels within the College to assist with communication, leadership, and team building skills. Trainings, combined with emphasis on professional development, mentoring and coaching, should be consistently emphasized.

Individuals are reluctant to report policy violations, unethical or unfair behavior because of fear of retaliation. A culture of fear appears to exist especially amongst non- exempt staff. The Ombuds Office is available to provide information on college policies and grievance procedures, and can make referrals to other available resources. In addition, the Ombuds can coach individuals on handling difficult conversations, or can facilitate dialogue for parties embroiled in conflict. Supervisors and managers need not consider it a betrayal, or become upset because an employer has taken a conflict situation to the Ombuds Office. This is why the office exists. Instead, managers and supervisors should recognize that an employee may be acting out of fear, may feel that the supervisor is too busy, or may feel that prior attempts
at communication have gone unheard. Appreciating that managing others is no easy task and requires skill, competency and discernment, the Ombuds Office is available to work with individuals and departments on rebuilding trust, and effective team building. Continually educating and reminding the community about Grinnell College’s No Retaliation Policy, integrating performance evaluation with hiring and firing, and integrating performance evaluation with promotion and compensation will aid understanding of processes, decrease fear and anxiety, and encourage individuals to speak up.

SUMMARY

Since its inception on February 1, 2013, the Grinnell College Ombuds Office has served approximately 210 visitors, resolving individual and group conflicts, and conducting conflict management trainings. The office has supported the campus community through, the restructuring and reorganizations of some units, offering coaching on difficult conversations and assisting individuals dealing with a variety of concerns. Evaluative relationships encompassed the majority of issues addressed through the Ombuds Office, followed closely by Peer and Colleague Relationships. Peer and colleague relationship issues related to one of three categories: lack of respect, bullying behavior, and lack of, or inadequate communication. Evaluative Relationships related mainly to inadequate communication, work/life balance, and fear of retaliation. The Ombuds Office dealt with these issues in a variety of ways - facilitated discussions, group meetings, group mediations, referrals to other offices, and providing upward feedback. Many individuals chose not to pursue any further action after participating in a facilitated discussion.

Supervisory relationship issues related to one or more of five categories with the majority relating to supervisor feedback, communication, and workload. The overarching theme was lack of communication on policies and procedure, and performance appraisals. Individuals sought clarity on departmental and college policies or process, and were frustrated with inconsistent application of some policies or processes.

Visitors served appeared to be very satisfied with the service they received. Arguably the word of mouth from visitors, plus the extensive outreach efforts has helped to develop an increasing level of visibility of the Ombuds Office in the Grinnell College community. In addition, more and more visitors are willing to participate in facilitated communications. This often helps ease tensions in difficult relationships and makes for a more productive workplace and educational environment. The Community is becoming increasingly aware of the existence of the Ombuds Office as a unique and valuable campus resource in large part, because the Ombuds Office is becoming recognized as a safe and confidential space where individuals can share their concerns.

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

The Ombuds Office will continue to identify trends and address individual and systemic concerns on campus. For the next fiscal year, the primary objective of the Ombuds Office is the signing and official adoption of the Ombuds Office Charter by President Kington. The Charter document explains that the Grinnell College Ombuds Office is expected to carry out its duties consistent with the International Ombudsman Association Code of Ethics and
Principles of Practice. An initial draft of the Charter has been completed and is presently under review. Other objectives are:

- Instituting a formal survey and evaluation of the Ombuds Office
- Collaborating with other offices to offer conflict prevention and conflict management trainings across campus
- Continuing Outreach – sharing information about the ombuds role, particularly with new students, staff and faculty joining Grinnell College

CONCLUSION

I anticipate that the Ombuds Office case activity will continue to grow in years to come as more members of the community become aware of the services of the office. I will continue my formal and informal outreach activities even as I understand that most often the office is ‘marketed’ through word-of-mouth around campus. I believe this testifies to the credibility and value of the office in the eyes of our campus community. Comments from visitors are positive, and overwhelmingly indicate that visitors to the Ombuds Office regard the office as fulfilling its role as a confidential, impartial, independent, and informal resource.

I am grateful to President Kington, the President’s office staff, and the college community for the support of the Ombuds program. Grinnell College’s ongoing respect for the Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association – which requires Ombuds to operate confidentially and independently – is of enormous value to the office, and, ultimately, to the members of the campus community the Ombuds Office serves. Particular thanks to the members of the Ombuds Advisory Council, who have given generously of their time to work with me on administrative and procedural matters. Thank you also to the many offices that have referred individuals to the Ombuds Office, and to the offices that have graciously responded to my requests for information and assistance. Finally, thank you to all of the students, staff, and faculty who have contacted the Ombuds Office for advice and information.
## Appendix A - Workshops and Outreach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Constituents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Presentations to: Student Affairs Staff, SGA &amp; SGA Council, Intercultural Engagement &amp; Leadership, Multicultural Affairs, Internal Communication, Admissions Staff, Financial Aid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Presentations to: Dining Services, Staff luncheon. Effective Negotiations Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Presentations to: Senior Leadership Group, Admission &amp; Financial Aid, Human Resources, Finance &amp; Accounting, Center for Career, Life &amp; Services, International Ombudsman Association Annual Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Presentations to: Communications staff, Library Staff, ISO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Presentations to: ITS, Ethical Tools to Diffuse Incivility, Restorative Justice Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Presentations to: Athletics Staff, Parent Groups, PCPOP, ISO, Conflict Management training to Resident Life Student Staff, Benefits Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Iowa Association of Mediators Fall Conference, SGA and SGA Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Presentation to: SHACS, Suicide Prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Presentations to: Sociology, Faulconer Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Presentation to: Early Career Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Presentation to: Campus Safety and Security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B - Feedback about Ombuds Office Services by Visitors

At this early stage in the operation of the Ombuds program, I intentionally refrained from distributing surveys/evaluation forms to individuals seeking assistance from the Ombuds Office. The consensus of opinion is that it is best to build trust in the community and establish the reputation of the office as a confidential, informal, independent and neutral resource, before requesting evaluations. It appears that visitors are more likely to respond to a survey once they have built a certain level of trust, and are convinced that their visit to the Ombuds Office is indeed confidential. I have however, solicited feedback from individuals who have made referrals to the Ombuds Office as well as directly from visitors and the public in general. Below are a few samples of comments received by the Ombuds Office in the past year:

- “We could not have accomplished this without you”
- “Thank you for your help, I am so glad you are here”
- “Thank you. As always, your insight is invaluable”
- “Thank you for working with us. You have provided us with some useful tools. We feel confident we can make good headway.”
- “Knowing that the Ombuds Office is available as a resource has been extremely helpful to me. The Ombuds has been a confidential sounding board for thinking through problems, asking hard questions but always in a kind and caring way. I am sure I will make use of the Ombuds services again sometime in the future. I am glad we have this resource.”
### Appendix C – Uniform Reporting Categories

**INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION**  
Uniform Reporting Categories  

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#### 1. Compensation & Benefits
- Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.
  - **1.a Compensation** (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)
  - **1.b Payroll** (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)
  - **1.c Benefits** (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker’s compensation insurance, etc.)
  - **1.d Retirement, Pension** (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)
  - **1.e Other** (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above sub-categories)

#### 2. Evaluative Relationships
- Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)
  - **2.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
  - **2.b Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
  - **2.c Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
  - **2.d Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
  - **2.e Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
  - **2.f Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
  - **2.g Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
  - **2.h Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
  - **2.i Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
  - **2.j Assignments/Schedules** (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)
  - **2.k Feedback** (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)
  - **2.l Consultation** (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)

#### 3. 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.)
  - **3.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
  - **3.b Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
  - **3.c Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
  - **3.d Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
  - **3.e Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
  - **3.f Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
  - **3.g Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
  - **3.h Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
  - **3.i Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
  - **3.j Other** (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

#### 4. 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.)
  - **4.a Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes** (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)
  - **4.b Job Classification and Description** (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)
  - **4.c Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment** (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)
  - **4.d Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity** (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories)
  - **4.e Career Progression (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)**
  - **4.f Rotation and Duration of Assignment** (non-completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)
  - **4.g Resignation** (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)
  - **4.h Termination/Non-Renewal** (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)
  - **4.i Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff** (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)
  - **4.j Position Elimination** (elimination or abolition of an individual’s position)
  - **4.k Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring** (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)
  - **4.l Other** (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above sub-categories)

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**INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION**  
Uniform Reporting Categories  

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**VERSION 2**  
October 2007

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12
5. 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.

5.a Criminal Activity (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)

5.b Business and Financial Practices (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)

5.c Harassment (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)

5.d Discrimination (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc. [being part of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category – applies in the U.S.])

5.e Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)

5.f Accessibility (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)

5.g Intellectual Property Rights (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)

5.h Privacy and Security of Information (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)

5.i Property Damage (personal property damage, liabilities)

5.j Other (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above sub-categories)

6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

6.a Safety (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for training and equipment)

6.b Physical Working/Living Conditions (temperature, odor, noise, available space, lighting, etc.)

6.c Ergonomics (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)

6.d Cleanliness (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)

6.e Security (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures [not for classifying “compromise of classified or top secret” information])

6.f Telework/Flexplace (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)

6.g Safety Equipment (access to use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)

6.h Environmental Policies (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)

6.i Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g., divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)

6.j Other (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)

7. Services/Administrative Issues

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

7.a Quality of Services (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)

7.b Responsiveness/Timeliness (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)

7.c Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules (impact of non-discretionary decisions, decisions about requests for administrative and academic services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)

7.d Behavior of Service Provider(s) (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)

7.e Other (any services or administrative issue not described by the above sub-categories)

8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

8.a Strategic and Mission-Related/ Strategic and Technical Management (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)

8.b Leadership and Management (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)

8.c Use of Positional Power/Authority (lack or abuse of power provided by individual’s position)

8.d Communication (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader’s communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)

8.e Restructuring and Relocation (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g., downsizing, off shoring, outsourcing)

8.f Organizational Climate (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)

8.g Change Management (managing, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)

8.h Priority Setting and/or Funding (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)

8.i Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)

8.j Interdepartment/Interorganization Work/Territory (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)

8.k Other (any organizational issue not described by the above sub-categories)

9. 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.

9.a Standards of Conduct (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)

9.b Values and Culture (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)

9.c Scientific Conduct/Integrity (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)

9.d Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8 (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)

9.e Other (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above sub-categories)
Appendix D – IOA Code of Ethics

IOA CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE
The IOA is dedicated to excellence in the practice of Ombudsman work. The IOA Code of Ethics provides a common set of professional ethical principles to which members adhere in their organizational Ombudsman practice.

Based on the traditions and values of Ombudsman practice, the Code of Ethics reflects a commitment to promote ethical conduct in the performance of the Ombudsman role and to maintain the integrity of the Ombudsman profession.

The Ombudsman shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the organization he or she serves, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of those organizations’ practices, processes, and policies.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

INDEPENDENCE
The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY
The Ombudsman, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombudsman does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

INFORMALITY
The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.

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Appendix E – IOA Standards of Practice

IOA STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

PREAMBLE

The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.

Each Ombudsman office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE

1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.

1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.

1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual’s concerns, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman’s direct observation.

1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.

1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unbiased.

2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.

2.3 The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independently of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman should not report to or be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.

2.4 The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman’s neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.

2.5 The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.

2.6 The Ombudsman helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitates discussion to identify the best options.

CONFIDENTIALITY

3.1 The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following:

The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual’s express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman may disclose information related to an individual’s issue only with the individual’s express permission and only to the extent permitted, and even then at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The Ombudsman may disclose information in confidence where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and when no other reasonable option is otherwise available. Whether this risk stems from a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.

3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.

3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and no testimonies in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a witness’s contact with the Ombudsman or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.

3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systematically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.

3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.

3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., terms, photo messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.

3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.

3.8 Communications made to the ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the ombudsman may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

INFORMATIONAL AND OTHER STANDARDS

4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: briefing, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.

4.2 The Ombudsman acts as an informal and off-the-record resource pursuant resolution of concern and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broken systems problems when appropriate.

4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions, mandate policy, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.

4.4 The Ombudsman supplement, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.

4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigatory or adjudicative procedure. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate office or individual.

4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breach confidentiality or anonymity, and provide recommendations for responsibly addressing them.

4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.

4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.

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