



Office of the Ombudsperson

Visitors to the Ombuds Office: What to Expect

Uncertain where to go or what to do?

Student, staff, faculty and other visitors to the Ombuds may not know where to find assistance or support for a College-related matter. Ombuds aid visitors in identifying appropriate resources, services, and processes to address their specific concerns, needs, and circumstances.

Need to talk through a situation with an objective partner?

The Ombuds will actively and nonjudgmentally listen to visitors in order to help to clarify concerns and generate viable options. Visitors are empowered to determine which, if any, course of action to pursue.

After listening to visitors' concerns, the Ombuds will:

- Briefly summarize, to confirm the accuracy of their understanding
- Share information such as relevant policy and procedures
- Suggest appropriate resources for visitor consideration
- Clarify concerns so that visitors can determine a course of action
- Help generate options for possible resolution
- Aid in weighing benefits and risks associated with different options
- Regularly look to their caseload to discern trends, patterns, and possible systemic issues to share with appropriate leadership – while maintaining the confidentiality of their visitors' information.

Ombuds may:

- Elevate individual experiences in an anonymized fashion or when expressly permitted, share visitor identity or case particulars
- Facilitate dialogues for group and interpersonal issues
- Provide mediation, shuttle diplomacy, and conflict-coaching services
- Develop workshops, trainings, and presentations to meet community, unit, or constituent need; this may be collaborative
- Recommend policy and process refinements or additions

Ombuds do not:

- Advocate for individuals, groups, or other entities, but rather, advocate for procedural fairness and equitable treatment
- Play a role in formal processes
- Investigate matters brought to their attention
- Represent an individual party to a dispute

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IOA Certified Organizational Ombuds Practitioner, CO-OP®

Certified Mediator, Social Justice Mediation Institution

Confidentiality

Visitors may speak openly to the Ombuds. Information shared is presumed to be confidential. Specifics will not be disclosed without explicit permission **except when the Ombuds discerns an imminent risk of serious harm.**

Impartiality

The Ombuds is a designated neutral for all visitors, not an advocate for a party to a dispute, but rather a resource and champion for fair and equitable treatment for all community members and affiliates. The Ombuds will avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Informality

The Ombuds is a voluntary and off-the-record resource for conflict resolution. The Ombuds does not act on the College's behalf, has no authority or role in formal processes, and is not a point of notice to the institution.

Independence

With interests in maintaining an accessible, unaligned, and trusted practice, Ombuds operate independently from other entities and offices. The Ombuds has sole discretion in determining how (and on occasion whether) to serve a visitor.

I will act with honesty and integrity; promote fairness and support fair process; remain non-judgmental, with empathy and respect for individual differences; promote dignity, diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging; communicate accurate understanding through active listening; promote individual empowerment, self-determination, and collaborative problem-solving; and endeavor to be an accessible, trusted, and respected informal resource for the Grinnell College community.

Thank you for entrusting me with your experiences. I look forward to your visit - Deborah