

Office of the Ombudsperson

PROTECTING CONFIDENTIALITY

The International Ombuds Association's Standards of Practice include the following regarding confidentiality:

- 1.1** The Ombuds is an independent, impartial, informal, and confidential resource for an organization. Compliance with these Standards of Practice is essential for any Ombuds program.
- 4.3** The Ombuds takes specific action 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 Ombuds, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombuds Office.
- 4.4** Consistent with these standards, consulting with the Ombuds is completely voluntary. People who use the services of the Ombuds are understood to have agreed to abide by the terms, conditions, and principles under which the program was created and not call the Ombuds to testify or disclose confidential information in any formal, legal, or other matter.
- 4.6** The Ombuds creates no permanent records containing confidential information. The Ombuds has a consistent practice for the timely destruction of confidential information. The Ombuds has a consistent practice for the timely destruction of confidential information.
- 5.1** The identity of those seeking assistance from the Ombuds, as well as communications and information specifically relating to them is confidential information.
- 5.2** To the maximum extent permitted by law, the Ombuds shall protect confidential information, and others cannot waive this requirement. The Ombuds and the organization that established the program shall take reasonable measures to safeguard the security of confidential information.
- 5.3** Except as provided in these standards, the Ombuds does not disclose confidential information in any matter within the organization.
- 5.4** The Ombuds shall oppose disclosing confidential information in any formal, administrative, or legal matter external to the organization, unless an appropriate judicial or regulatory authority determines that disclosure is necessary to prevent a manifest injustice or that disclosure is required because the interests served by disclosure clearly outweigh the interests served by ombuds confidentiality.
- 5.5** The Ombuds may disclose confidential information as necessary if the Ombuds determines that the failure to do so could result in imminent risk of serious harm.
- 5.6** The Ombuds may disclose confidential information about a specific matter to the extent the ombuds determines it is necessary to defend themselves against a formal complaint of professional misconduct.
- 5.7** Confidential information relating to an individual may be disclosed with their permission to assist with informal resolution of a concern but at the sole discretion of the Ombuds.
- 5.8** The Ombuds may provide non-confidential information about the ombuds program in any appropriate forum. The Ombuds shares data, trends, or reports in a manner that protects confidential information.

The Grinnell College Ombuds is a certified organizational ombuds, practicing in accord with IOA's Ethical Principles and Standards of Practice.

Confidentiality is a principle increasingly tested by the proliferation of technology and its routine usage, as well as by challenges to security. Please help me safeguard your confidentiality and privacy:

- Know that Outlook email, chats, virtual meetings, calendaring, files, etc. create institutional records and that I minimize their use to the greatest practicable extent.
- Please make appointments via phone rather than sending an Outlook request or an email with details of your concern. If you must leave a message, simply ask that I return your call and provide your number.
- I welcome you to familiarize yourself with routine office practices, available on the Office SharePoint site: [Operating Manual](#).
- Measures such as disabling the Outlook "Works With" function and utilizing an encrypted personal drive for anonymized data have been effected to enhance security.
- I remain vigilant in efforts to mitigate the risks associated with digital communication and data maintenance.
- I am available to discuss ways that you can best protect the confidentiality and privacy of our visit.