



March 2, 2018

To: Stephen Kerber and Dan Segrist,
Co-Chairs, Faculty Welfare Council for AY 2017-18

From: Seran Aktuna and Mary Sue Love,
Faculty Ombuds

Re: 2017 Annual Report

The Faculty Ombuds Service operates under the Welfare Council of the Faculty Senate and is tasked with the following duties as described in its operating papers:

The Ombuds Service at SIUE provides impartial, confidential and informal resolution of disputes for faculty members and administrators. The program seeks to help those faculty or administrators with interpersonal misunderstandings as well as those concerned with more administrative or academic issues. These misunderstandings may be between two or more faculty members or between a faculty member and an administrator. The main purpose of the Ombuds Service is to mediate conflict. It will not serve to adjudicate breaches in formal administrative policies (a formal grievance procedure is in place for this purpose). As a result, the Ombuds faculty will listen, offer options and facilitate resolution to those in conflict. This will be done without preference to one party over another. Rather, the goal of the Ombuds faculty will be to mediate disputes and ensure that all party's voices are heard (http://www.siu.edu/ugov/faculty/welfarecouncil/ombuds_service_policy.shtml).

The Faculty Ombuds adhere to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice

(https://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA_Main/media/SiteFiles/IOA_Standards_of_Practice_Oct09.pdf) and Code of Ethics (https://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA_Main/media/SiteFiles/Code_Ethics_1-07.pdf), which include the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality, confidentiality, and informality. As such, the Ombuds service provides an independent, neutral, confidential and informal place for faculty to discuss their concerns and receive guidance on the options available to resolve disputes.

This report covers Spring, Summer, and Fall 2017, the sixteenth full year of operation for the Faculty Ombuds Service. Below we summarize our work with faculty, while maintaining the strictest anonymity/confidentiality for all concerned, and outline activities related to maintaining and strengthening effective Ombuds services.

Summary of Work with Faculty

In adherence to the IOA Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics, we do not keep records. However, we do log the number and types of cases that we see. In 2017, the Office has continued to provide services to faculty in a wide range of situations.

The raw numbers for 2017 show that we had 52 contacts over 21 separate cases (see Table I below). “Contact” refers to any interaction we have had with (or on behalf of) a visitor while “situation/case” refers to each unique concern brought to the office. The number of cases decreased last year along with the number of contacts, although the pattern we saw in 2017 is similar to trends observed in years previous to 2013-2016 when we experienced an increase in the number of contacts with visitors.

Table I: Number of cases and number of contacts with visitors

<i>Year</i>	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
# contacts	35	48	39	30	27	32	54	68	131	77	77	91	52
# situations/ cases	17	18	17	16	19	17	16	21	23	37	20	34	21

Nature of Engagement with Visitors

The Ombuds keep 10 drop-in office hours a week along with 10 more hours for investigation and other appointments. Faculty may visit during these times, or schedule an appointment at a time suitable for them. The Ombuds role has typically involved meeting with visitors to listen to their concerns, brainstorming to identify options and resources, guiding visitors to the relevant university resources and policies, and helping them to arrive at their own solutions to problems. On many occasions, we researched relevant policies and/or contacted Human Resources representatives and/or other administrators to obtain information for visitors.

As per our office policy, the two Ombuds consult about the cases brought to the office. In every case, we ask the visitor’s permission to share his/her situation with the Ombuds who was not present at the initial visit, and this permission is usually granted. This opportunity for the two Ombuds to consult with each other has proven to be very important and effective in responding to our visitors’ concerns. This practice ensures that both Ombuds are involved (to varying degrees) in most situations brought to the attention of the office, providing the benefit of two perspectives and two analytical approaches.

Composition of Visitors

As in past years, tenured and tenure-track faculty comprised most Ombuds visitors, although we did work with visitors performing in different roles at SIUE. Faculty Ombuds Operating Papers state that: “In those instances where one or more of the individuals involved are represented under a collective bargaining agreement Ombuds services can only be provided if they do not represent a violation of the covering agreement.” Given that the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the University and

non-tenure track faculty encourages such faculty to utilize the Ombuds Service¹, it has been our policy to work with non-tenure track faculty on issues of interpersonal conflicts and communication styles and refer them to their Union representatives for non-interpersonal concerns.

As in previous years, individuals from most units found their way to the Ombuds office this year, although the vast majority of visitors were from the main campus.

Visitor Concerns

The issues brought to the Ombuds office are often complicated and involve multiple issues. The International Ombudsman Association's list of Uniform Reporting Categories (https://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA_Main/media/SiteFiles/UTFRC-Desk-Reference-v2.pdf) provides a contextualized overview of the types of issues for which Ombuds assistance was sought in the past year. And, while we do not keep detailed or identifying records, we do tally the issues brought to our office. Below are the 9 general categories:

1. *Compensation and Benefits*: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs
2. *Evaluative Relationships*: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., supervisor-employee, faculty-student)
3. *Peer and Colleague Relationships*: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization)
4. *Career Progression and Development*: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative process regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignments, job security, and separation).
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
6. *Services/Administrative issues*: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising about services or administrative offices including from external parties
7. *Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related*: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that related to the whole or some part of an organization
8. *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

¹ Article VIII of the Collective Bargaining Agreement: Grievance Policy, Section 8.2.1 states that, “ ... it is usually most desirable for a non-tenure track faculty member and the immediately involved supervisor to resolve problems through free and informal communications.” 8.2.1.1 “The non-tenure track faculty member shall have the option, and shall be encouraged, to utilize the Faculty Ombuds Service as a resource to assist in attempting to resolve the problem.”

As has been the case in previous years, the majority of cases in 2017 involved concerns surrounding either evaluative or peer and colleague relationships. We saw issues of respect/treatment, trust/integrity, reputation, communication, assignments/schedules, performance appraisal, climate, and fair treatment. At least eleven cases related to difficulties with the evaluation process, including conflicts with a chair.

These same concerns were reflected in issues regarding peers and colleagues. Several visitors came to discuss disputes with colleagues around priorities, values, beliefs, respect/treatment, trust/integrity, and reputation. At least two individuals reported concerns regarding dysfunctional relationships with their colleagues.

As always, when there are concerns regarding possible Title IX issues, we strongly encourage our visitors to report their concerns to a responsible employee.

We worked with several visitors to help them understand the grievance process. As this process is changing with the certification of the Faculty Association, we anticipate continued work to clarify process and options regarding grievances.

Ombuds Intervention/Resolution

In line with our general approach to the resolution of conflicts mentioned on page one above, issues brought to our office were addressed through exploring the visitor(s)' options for dealing with problematic relationships between members of the faculty in the unit, by facilitating communication between the parties when asked by the visitor(s), and by gathering information on the questions at hand from the Coordinator for Policy, Communication and Issues of Concern at the Provost's Office, the Title IX Coordinator, or Human Resources.

Our commitment to informality and confidentiality prohibit us from keeping formal records or following up with visitors, making it difficult to evaluate the effects of our actions as ombuds. Some visitors seem to reach a clearer perspective on their situations during a visit or leave with options for action that they were unaware of prior to their visit. Other cases allow us to informally track the movement of a situation toward resolution. However, we are unable to initiate contact with past visitors to ask whether a situation has improved as a result of the course of action planned with a visitor.

Activities Related to Maintaining Effective Ombuds Services

In addition to our primary activities as outlined above, we have been engaged in numerous activities to maintain and improve the work of the Ombuds Office. These endeavors can be described as follows:

Evaluation of the Ombuds Service

The Welfare Council has not completed the annual evaluation of the Ombuds service as of the date of this report. When it is completed, we will review and include this in our next report.

Outreach

Throughout 2017 we sent reminders about our office to all faculty in the form of an e-mail brochure listing our services. We attended New Faculty Orientation, introducing incoming faculty to the types of services offered through the Ombuds Office. We sent Deans, Chairs and Directors letters reminding them how our office can work with them and their faculty, and inviting them to involve us in issues that fall within our job boundaries. In April 2017, we presented at the New Faculty Workshop on navigating faculty politics. One of us also presented at the 2017 International Ombudsman Association Conference in Minneapolis, MN and the 2017 Academy of Management Conference in Atlanta, GA.

Conclusions and Reflections

As in previous years, we continue to believe that the Ombuds office is a necessary resource for faculty at SIUE. While the State passed and funded a budget this year, the environment is still unstable. The Faculty Association has drafted a new grievance policy, and as they negotiate a full contract, we will need to stay abreast of these changes.

Planning

We believe the Ombuds service will continue to provide a valuable service to the Faculty as an informal and confidential venue for dealing with inevitable workplace conflicts. In 2018, we are planning for several initiatives to provide outreach to the faculty at large, for instance, through collaborations with professional development resources such as the Midweek Mentor. We will continue to highlight our services to campus personnel at all levels and hope to work with the Provost's office to provide more training to chairs.