

# IT'S TIME FOR AN OMBUDS:

Empowering People & Institutions to Reach Their Full Potential



## What is an Ombuds?

For students, faculty and staff, an ombuds program offers a safe, off-the-record and knowledgeable resource to help address a conflict or concern. Ombuds work in a way that is:

- Confidential
- Impartial
- Informal
- Independent

## What do Ombuds do?

Ombuds engage in confidential and constructive problem-solving toward the goal of instilling respect in communities, organizations and professional relationships. An ombuds program:

- Empowers individuals to address disputes, conflicts and barriers.
- Supports individual control of disclosure.
- If desired, promotes resolution of issues without formal reporting, sanctions, or punishment.

## How Do Universities Benefit?

Increases leadership's awareness of important issues by identifying systemic issues and trends.

Helps institutions anticipate and avoid risk, litigation, and costly damage to an institution's reputation.

Serves the whole system—faculty, staff, and students—including leadership and those accused.

Offers confidential guidance to victims, who are more likely to report or resolve their issues informally thus improving campus climate.

Advocates for fair processes and equity.

Supports system improvement, suggesting new policies and procedures and assisting in training on conflict management, civility and respect.

## Making an Impact on Sexual Harassment

The NAS report released in June 2018 found that sexual harassment in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine is common, yet unlikely to be reported.

An ombuds provides a place to receive confidential guidance BEFORE action is taken – a valuable resource for those who may be reluctant to come forward. For reporting sexual harassment, an ombuds program offers:

- A place to go that is outside of formal reporting channels.
- A nonjudgmental, confidential and safe place to explore paths forward.
- An alternative, informal means of resolution without fear of retaliation.
- A way to understand their institution's policies and processes.
- A completely voluntary option.



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