

Introduction:

The name “ombudsman” (om budz man) is Swedish and literally means “representative.” At the most fundamental level, an ombudsman is one who assists individuals and groups in the resolution of conflicts or concerns. There are several different titles or names for this position: “ombudsman,” “ombudsperson” or “ombuds” among others. (For this document, the term “ombudsman” will be used.) Ombudsmen work in all types of organizations, including government agencies, colleges and universities, corporations, hospitals and other medical facilities, and news organizations.

A few facts:

- The Office of the University Ombudsman was established at USC in August 2006 under then Provost Becker and President Sorensen
- The principles under which the University Ombudsman functions are consistent with the [Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association \(IOA\)](#). These Standards of Practice are based upon, and derived from, the ethical principles stated in the [IOA Code of Ethics](#).
- [The International Ombudsman Association \(IOA\)](#) is the largest international association of professional organizational Ombudsmen practitioners in the world, representing almost 900 members from the United States and across the globe.
- The University Ombudsman serves as a confidential, neutral, informal, and independent resource for faculty concerns and conflicts.
- The services of the University Ombudsman are available to tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track faculty on all campuses. except for [USC Upstate](#) which has its own Faculty Ombuds

Ombuds practice is guided by four ethical standards:

- **INDEPENDENT:** The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.
- **INFORMAL:** The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.
- **NEUTRAL:** 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.
- **CONFIDENTIAL:** 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.

What we do:

- Listen
- Offer information about University policies and procedures
- Discuss concerns and clarify the issues
- Help identify and evaluate a range of options for resolving a problem
- Gather information and offer referrals to other resources
- Help visitors prepare for a difficult conversation
- Facilitate communication, indirectly or through shuttle diplomacy with concerned parties
- Work for collaborative agreements
- Track perceived issues and trends
- Make recommendations for institutional change
- Do all our work informally

What we don't do:

- Make decisions for a visitor
- Establish, change, or set aside policies
- Offer legal advice
- Offer psychological counseling
- Participate in formal processes such as Academic Grievance Procedures
- Serve as an agent of notice for the University
- Serve as an advocate for any individual
- Participate in formal investigations or write case reports.
- Serve as a neutral adjudicator of complaints
- Create or maintain records or reports for the organization except for an annual report to the Faculty Senate

What we did in 2016-2017:

- Met with a total of 45 faculty visitors
- Took many phone calls and email requests from faculty, staff and students for information and consultation
- Most cases resolved without initiating a formal grievance process
- We received extraordinary cooperation from Provost's Office, HR, EEOC, University Counsel, deans, chairs, and others
- The University ombudsman continued his participation as a member of the Nominations and Elections Committee (NEC) of the International Ombudsman Association and on the Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP) Appeals Committee of IOA.
- I provided members of the Faculty Senate with a copy of the annual report of the University ombudsman for 2015-2016 and posted it on the ombuds website:
<http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/annual.shtml>
- In January and August of each year, the University ombudsman provides materials to attendees at the New Faculty Orientation describing the work of the University ombudsman.

11-year summary (2006-2017):

- Over the past eleven years the University Ombudsman has assisted some 550 faculty members for an average of 50 visitors per year.
- The number of faculty members utilizing the services of the University Ombudsman seems to be in keeping with many Carnegie Foundation Tier I institutions who publish an annual report and who I have been tracking over the past 11 years (average about 52.2 visitors per year based on 178 of these annual reports).

Uniform Data Reporting Categories:

In the fall of 2003, a joint TOA-UCOA Task Force of colleagues representing corporate, higher education, government agencies, and international agency sectors was formed to develop a list of categories that could be used by Ombudsman across sectors to:

- classify the kinds of issues for which people use ombudsman
- identify trends in requests for services, and
- develop professional development needs

Annual Report – IOA Uniform Data Reporting Categories:

To preserve the confidentiality of visitors to the University ombudsman, no notes, documents, or records of any kind are maintained related to the identity of individual faculty members including their gender, race, department, college, school, or campus. The only information retained from contacts by faculty visitors with the University ombudsman is that regarding the nature of the issue discussed. The **International Ombudsman Association** has a series of nine **Uniform Reporting Categories** under which are an extensive series of subcategories that permit placement of any issue, question, concern, or inquiry. Faculty conflicts and concerns addressed by the University ombudsman are described under the appropriate category.

These same categories were used in this report in in our 11 previous annual reports.

(1) Compensation & Benefits - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits, and other benefit programs. (7 visitors in 2016-2017)

(2) Evaluative Relationships - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. senior faculty-junior faculty, program director faculty, chair-faculty, dean-faculty, faculty-student). (17 visitors in 2016-2017)

(3) Peer and Colleague Relationships - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a direct supervisory relationship (e.g., two faculty members within the same department or conflict involving faculty members of the same college or unit). (6 visitors in 2016-2017)

(4) Career Progression and Development - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, or what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation). (5 visitors in 2016-2017)

(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. (3 visitors in 2016-2017)

(6) Safety, Health, and Physical Environment - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health, and Infrastructure-related issues. (3 visitors in 2016-2017)

(7) Services/Administrative Issues - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices. (3 visitors in 2016-2017)

(8) Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization. (No visitors in 2016-2017)

(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. (1 visitor in 2016-2017)

This report provides a summary of the work of the University Ombudsman during the past 11 years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	All years	% of all visitors, all years.
Reporting categories	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017		
1. Evaluative Relationships	23	12	16	7	4	15	15	13	9	15	17	146	26.5%
2. Career Progression and Development	12	18	8	15	6	14	8	9	8	3	5	106	19.3%
3. Peer and Colleague Relationships	0	5	9	10	9	6	8	9	5	6	6	73	13.3%
4. Values, Ethics, and Standards	9	3	11	0	6	4	5	5	1	1	1	46	8.4%
5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	0	1	3	3	4	8	5	5	8	8	3	48	8.7%
6. Compensation and Benefits	6	4	0	3	3	4	3	3	6	7	7	46	8.4%
7. Services /Administrative Issues	6	4	0	5	4	3	2	2	2	1	3	32	5.8%
8. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment	5	4	0	0	8	1	3	2	1	3	3	30	5.4%
9. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	0	2	2	5	1	0	0	5	5	3	0	23	4.2%
	61	53	49	48	45	55	49	53	45	47	45	550	100%

Final Comments:

- It is worth reminding our colleagues on the four-year campuses and on the Palmetto college campuses that the services of the University Ombudsman are available to all tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track faculty members on all USC system-wide campuses.
- Last fall, USC Upstate, hired Diane M. Daane, MS, JD, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice as their faculty ombuds. Diane retired in December after 25 years at Upstate, and is highly respected by her colleagues.
- The Division of Student Affairs has a student ombudsperson, Lisa Jerald (777.4172) who deals directly with conflicts and concerns of undergraduate students.
- Graduate students with conflicts or concerns are encouraged to contact Dale Moore in the Graduate School at 777.8237
- The Faculty Civility Advocate is charged with resolving complaints of faculty-on-faculty workplace bullying. A complaint filed with the Faculty Civility Advocate starts a formal procedure towards resolution. Individuals are encouraged to first seek informal resolution through their department chair, supervisor, or dean, or to speak to the Ombudsman. If you would like to meet with the Faculty Civility Advocate, please contact her at 777-7419 or fca@mailbox.sc.edu
- This office continues to appreciate the work of the Faculty Civility Advocate who is charged with resolving complaints of faculty-on-faculty workplace bullying. Individuals who seek informal resolution through their department chair, supervisor, or dean, or who speak to the Ombudsman, now have a formal route towards resolution of their workplace bullying concerns.
- In my Annual Report for 2012-2013 I expressed concern that our hard-working non-tenure track faculty on the Columbia, other four-year, and on the Palmetto College campuses often feel underappreciated, underpaid, and disrespected. From time to time issues arise regarding the salaries and workload of non-tenure track faculty, and their lack of job security. The Report of Non-Tenure Track Faculty Survey in Spring 2015 presented at the June 2015 Faculty Senate meeting was a significant step forward in addressing these issues. Based on that survey, the Faculty Senate established an Ad Hoc 2015-2016 Non-Tenure Track Faculty Task Force. In their report to the Faculty Senate in September 2016, this Task Force recommended that full-time, NTT faculty become voting members of the Faculty with representation on the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate has approved that recommendation. The NTT Task Force also recommended: (1) That colleges and departments implement multiple year contracts for NTT faculty as a reward and incentive for strong performance and a tool for retention. (2) That all NTT faculty should have clear advancement opportunities and criteria for promotion, should have mentorship opportunities and should have regular performance evaluations. (3) That across colleges and schools USC standardize job titles for NTT faculty so that titles correspond to faculty members' primary responsibility and that titles communicate clearly consistent promotion opportunities. (4) That, to the extent possible, eligibility for awards and honors be expanded to all faculty, including NTT faculty—particularly for teaching, research, and service

awards. Once implemented these latter initiatives will be of great benefit to our dedicated NTT faculty and their need for conditions that support their work and professional development.

- There are a few lingering matters that concerned faculty have brought to my attention that have challenged my abilities over the past few years. These include:
 - a. several units with alleged hostile work environments in which junior or nontenured faculty do not want to take the matter to the Faculty Civility Advocate for fear of eventual retribution;
 - b. concerns over unresolved salary issues or money due faculty for which there seems to be no final arbiter (this may take place where there has been a transfer from one unit to another or from one director, chair, or dean to another or during the transition from the academic year to the summer or at the whim of a petulant staff member or administrator);
 - c. inconsistencies in the application of the Family Friendly policies from one department to another;
 - d. unwillingness or reluctance by some units to facilitate individual accommodations for faculty members with disabilities
 - e. the apparent absence of clearly defined policies concerning employee credit card use and, more specifically, a policy concerning who is entitled to card benefits generated by university related travel and
 - f. inconsistencies in the application of policies regarding the appointment of some faculty but not others to 9 or 12-month appointments within the same unit.
- Whatever success has been achieved during these past eleven years by the University Ombudsman is attributable to the cooperation and support of faculty and administrative leaders in the University who were willing to listen to various matters brought to their attention and work with all parties concerned to find a fair and just resolution to the issues at hand. The University Ombudsman is particularly appreciative of the administration's willingness to support the work of this office without violating the independence, neutrality, informality, or confidentiality of the ombuds process.

Contact information and Previous Annual Reports:

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www.sc.edu/ombuds/

Email is not appropriate for sharing confidential information.
Please call me and so that we can arrange to meet in person.

Previous Annual Reports may be found on the University Ombudsman website at:

<http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/annual.shtml>