

**Introduction:**

At the most fundamental level, an ombuds [ombudsman or ombudsperson] is one who assists individuals and groups in the resolution of conflicts or concerns. Ombuds work in all types of organizations, including governmental agencies, colleges and universities, corporations, hospitals and other medical facilities, and news organizations.

- The principles under which the Faculty Ombuds functions are consistent with the [Standards of Practice](#) and the [IOA Code of Ethics](#) of the International Ombudsman Association.
- The services of the Faculty Ombuds are available to tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track faculty on all USC system-wide campuses except for [USC Upstate](#) which has its own Faculty Ombuds.
- 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 under ACAF 1.80. If you would like to meet with the Faculty Civility Advocate, please contact Dr. Susan Bon at 777-2907 or [fca@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:fca@mailbox.sc.edu)

**Ombuds practice is guided by four ethical standards:**

- **INDEPENDENT:** The faculty ombuds is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.
- **INFORMAL:** The faculty ombuds, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.
- **NEUTRAL:** The faculty ombuds, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The faculty ombuds does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.
- **CONFIDENTIAL:** The faculty ombuds 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 2018-2019:**

- Met with a total of 47 faculty visitors, responded to many phone calls and consultation requests
- Took many phone calls and email requests from faculty, staff and students (and their parents) 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 and others
- The Faculty Ombuds continued his participation as a member of the Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP) Appeals Committee of IOA. I also serve as a mentor for several newly appointed ombuds at other academic institutions.
- On September 27, 2018 the Faculty Ombuds spoke to new faculty members at the **New Faculty Academy** on the topic of "Dealing with Questions, Concerns, Conflicts and Challenging Issues in Your New Academic Setting."
- On November 7, 2018 the Faculty Ombuds spoke at Faculty Senate and summarized the annual report of the Faculty Ombuds for 2017-2018. This and all previous annual reports are posted on the faculty ombuds website: <http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/annual.shtml>
- In January and August of each year, the Faculty Ombuds provides written materials to attendees at the New Faculty Orientation describing the work of the Faculty Ombuds.
- On April 12, 2019, the Faculty Ombuds participated in the **Academic Administrators Academy**. The Academy is designed for faculty administrators in the first 1-3 years of their appointments. Our focus is on how various UofSC offices receive, investigate, and respond to allegations of faculty incivility, including what resources we must support the complainant.

**13-year summary (2006-2019):**

- Over the past 13 years the Faculty Ombuds has assisted almost 650 faculty members for an average of 50 visitors per year.
- The number of faculty members utilizing the services of the Faculty Ombuds 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 13 years (average about 54 visitors per year based on 197 annual reports).
- A review of the most recent 4 years of visitors to the faculty ombuds reveals that about half are male faculty members and the other half are female faculty members.

**Annual Report – IOA Uniform Data Reporting Categories developed in 2003 by IOA:**

These same categories were used in this report in in our 12 previous annual reports.

**(1) 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). (15 visitors in 2018-2019) (178 visitors all years – 27.5%)

**(2) 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. (12 visitors in 2018-2019) (68 visitors all years – 10.5%)

**(3) Compensation & Benefits** - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits, and other benefit programs. (5 visitors in 2018-2019) (57 visitors all years - 9%)

**(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). (4 in 2018-2019) (122 visitors all years - 19%)

**(5) 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. (4 visitors in 2018-2019) (53 visitors all years - 8%)

**(6) Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related** - Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization. (3 visitors in 2018-2019) (26 visitors all years - 4%)

**(7) 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). (2 visitors in 2018-2019) (78 visitors all years - 12%)

**(8) Safety, Health, and Physical Environment** - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health, and Infrastructure-related issues. (2 visitors in 2018-2019) (33 visitors all years - 5%)

**(9) Services/Administrative Issues** - Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices. (No visitors in 2018-2019) (32 visitors all years - 5%)

This report provides a summary of the work of the Faculty Ombuds the past 12 years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	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	2017-2018	2018-2019	2006-2019
<i>Evaluative Relationships</i>	23	12	16	7	4	15	15	13	9	15	17	17	15	178 27%
<i>Career Progress &amp; Development</i>	12	18	8	15	6	14	8	9	8	3	5	12	4	122 20%
<i>Peer and Colleague Relationships</i>	0	5	9	10	9	6	8	9	5	6	6	3	2	78 13%
<i>Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance</i>	0	1	3	3	4	8	5	5	8	8	3	8	12	68 9%
<i>Compensation and Benefits</i>	6	4	0	3	3	4	3	3	6	7	7	6	5	57 9%
<i>Values, Ethics, and Standards</i>	9	3	11	0	6	4	5	5	1	1	1	3	4	53 8%
<i>Safety, Health, and Physical Environment</i>	5	4	0	0	8	1	3	2	1	3	3	1	2	33 5%
<i>Services Administrative Issues</i>	6	4	0	5	4	3	2	2	2	1	3	0	0	32 5%
<i>Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related</i>	0	2	2	5	1	0	0	5	5	3	0	0	3	26 4%
	61	53	49	48	45	55	49	53	45	47	45	50	47	647

**Final Comments:**

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:

- units with alleged hostile or intimidating work environments in which faculty of all ranks especially junior or nontenured faculty do not want to take the matter to the Faculty Civility Advocate for fear of eventual retribution;
- the lack of appropriate communication with, accommodation for and respect toward faculty and staff by some senior faculty or faculty administrators;
- concerns over unresolved salary issues or money due faculty who believe they have excellent teaching, research and service records in comparison with others at the same rank. Some transparent system needs to be established to resolve these issues that is fair to all;
- screaming or shouting and threats of retaliation by senior administrators at faculty members writing emails questioning changes in the faculty member's duties, request for a salary increase or request for consideration for promotion and tenure. "Get in line and don't ever..." "Not playing nice". lack of cooperation often leads to retaliation;
- withdrawal of service or teaching opportunities for those getting ready for post-tenure review. Set up to fail?
- in some units there is not much opportunity for faculty to move up administratively, receive appropriate mentoring or assistance with career development;
- micromanagement by senior administrators of faculty research activities including the requirement to apply only to agencies with high indirect costs;
- lack of shared governance in some departments.

Whatever success has been achieved during these past thirteen years by the Faculty Ombuds 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 Faculty Ombuds is particularly appreciative of Provost Gabel's willingness to support the work of this office without violating the independence, neutrality, informality, or confidentiality of the ombuds process.

Faculty Ombuds  
[www.sc.edu/ombuds/](http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/)

Previous annual reports may be found at <http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/annual.shtml>