

**UConn Ombuds Office Annual Report
June 1, 2013 – May 31, 2014**

Included in this report are data and commentary from the first year's operation of the UConn Ombuds Office, including number of visitors, employee classification of visitors, and gender. Issues or concerns raised by visitors are tabulated according the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) uniform reporting categories (a copy of the IOA categories is appended to this report). In some places, data are further subdivided according to graduate student, staff, or faculty employee status. In places where this occurs, the intention is to present information in the most meaningful way for offices concerned with personnel matters for faculty, staff, and graduate students.

When reviewing the data, it is important to interpret the information in the context of how an ombuds comes in contact with visitors and how issues are tabulated. Visitors voluntarily contact the office; no one is compelled to interact with the UConn Ombuds. The ombuds serves as a neutral party and does not attempt to investigate the veracity of any statements by visitors or determine the facts of what is being described. The issues raised are based on what visitors report and then translated into the IOA categories. Thus, there are no verbatim quotes from visitors nor is there information that might reveal the source of a reported issue.

Visitors

The visitor data presented can only be interpreted as *the number (or percentage) of employees or graduate students experiencing a campus concern who have chosen to contact the Ombuds Office as a neutral and confidential means to explore options towards resolving an issue*. The data presented **do not** represent the percentage of all employees or graduate students experiencing conflict nor the extent to which employees and graduate students seek other informal methods of resolving conflict.

Approximate employee usage rates of ombuds offices at colleges and universities range from 1% to 5% of the constituency population. The employee usage rate in the first year of the UConn Ombuds Office was 3.5%.

The graduate student usage rate was 0.4%. Combining both population groups the usage rate was 1.7%.

Issues or concerns raised by visitors to the Ombuds Office

Issues raised range across several categories for any given visitor. Often, a visitor will have in mind one or a few main concern(s) but several other issues will be revealed during the course of an interaction. The Ombuds makes no attempt to assess what a visitor's *major concern* or *most important concern* may be when recording issues. Despite this limitation, the data may be helpful to readers in discerning the types and frequencies of issues on the minds of people choosing to explore informal resolutions or other approaches to problems affecting their work. As is the case with usage rate, the types of issues raised are very much in line with reports from ombuds offices at other universities.

The 214 visitors raised a total of 1301 issues (6.1 issues per visitor). The largest IOA category of concern raised by visitors was in the area of *Evaluative Relationships*, issues arising amidst supervisor-supervisee relationships (45% of all issues). This observation is a consistent finding in the reports of most ombuds reports available for review.

Pre-dispute versus Post-dispute

The Ombuds Office is designed as an informal mechanism, when appropriate, to address workplace or other campus concerns. Thus, attention was given to whether a visitor's concern was raised in the Ombuds Office prior to taking a formal action (pre-dispute) or after a formal action (post-dispute). Of visitors where this distinction was evident (203), 172 (84.7%) were addressing a pre-dispute issue and 31 (15.3%) made contact with the Ombuds Office following engagement in a formal dispute resolution process or after formally addressing their concern with a campus regulatory or compliance office or via union intervention.

Mirroring the response of institutions in academia, private industry, and government, the University of Connecticut established the Ombuds Office in 2013 to assist employees and graduate students pursuing informal resolution of campus concerns or problems. The Ombuds Office is located on the 2nd level of the Homer Babbidge Library and maintains a campus webpage at www.ombuds.uconn.edu. The UConn Ombuds is intended to serve as an *organizational ombudsperson*. There are a variety of Ombuds models all emphasizing that the incumbent has no command authority in the organization, functions independently of normal reporting channels, does not serve in other roles that could jeopardize neutrality, and is committed to confidentiality of communications to the extent allowed by law.^a The distinction of an *organizational ombudsperson* is the absence of the intention or ability to conduct formal investigations, be a finder of facts, publish findings, or render judgments on grievances whereas *statutory* or *classical ombuds* are vested with some or all of these powers. The UConn Ombuds Office Charter describing the office and the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the IOA are appended to this report.

I am grateful to those with whom I have visited for their enthusiasm and creativity in pursuing solutions to the problems they experienced. I can confidently report to our

^a see Gadlin H (2000). *The ombudsman: What's in a name?* *Negotiation Journal* 16(1), 37-48.

community that when it was necessary to reach out across campus to administrative offices and off campus to union stewards and executives, I was received with professionalism, cooperation, and openness to sharing interests and discussing the possibility of finding a mutually agreeable outcome for those involved.

The successful launching of the office this past year could not have occurred without the talent and support of Lillian Bosques and Rachel Rubin of the Presidents Office, Maxine Marcy of Design and Document Production, Andrew Bacon of UITS, and the entire staff of the Babbidge Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Wohl, DVM, MPA
UConn Ombuds

June 25, 2014

Estimated Ombuds Office Service Population: The Ombuds Office service population includes faculty and staff employees and graduate students at the Storrs and regional campuses but does not include the UConn Health Center. These estimated numbers and percentages of employee and graduate student populations are unofficial numbers tabulated solely for the purpose of interpreting the visitor data for the University Ombuds Office.

Table 1. Total Estimated Employees: ~ 4757

Classification	Number	% total	% male	% female
Faculty *	~1519	~32%	~61%	~39%
Staff	~3238	~68%	~43%	~57%

* tenure track and non tenure track

Table 1a. Estimated Employees by Union Membership (9% or ~ 412 employees in the service population are not members of a collective bargaining unit).

Classification	Number	% total employees
AAUP	~1713	~36.0%
UCPEA	~1817	~38.2%
NP-2 (CEUI)	~466	~9.8%
NP-3 (AFSCME)	~221	~4.6%
NP-5 (CPFU)	~108	~2.3%
Total	~ 4345	(91%)

Table 1c. Total Graduate/Professional Students in Ombuds Office Service Population

Total UConn	Number	% total	% male	% female
7879	~7026	~89%	~48%	~52%

UConn Ombuds Office Visitor Data: Each visitor represents a single interaction with the individual initiating the contact. A more involved series of meetings, including meetings with other individuals or groups, may ensue from any initial visitor interaction.

Table 2. Ombuds Office Visitor Demographics & Employee Classification
(Total visitors = 214)

Classification	Number	% visitors	% total pop	% male	% female
Faculty *	53	24.8%	3.5 %	43%	57%
Staff	116	54.2%	3.6%	32%	68%
AAUP	49	22.9%	2.9%	-	-
UCPEA	69	32.2%	3.8%	-	-
NP-2 (CEUI)	6	2.8%	1.3%	-	-
NP-3 (AFSCME)	8	3.7%	3.6%	-	-
NP-5 (CPFU)	4	1.9%	3.7%	-	-
MNGMT	27	12.6%	9.9%	-	-
Confidential					
Unk/Unrep	6	2.8%	-	-	-
Total Employee visitors	169	79%	3.6%	35%	65%
Grad Students	35	16%	0.4%	43%	57%
Other	10	5%	-	50%	50%
Total Visitors	214	100%	-	37%	62%

* 64% (34/53) of faculty visitors were tenured

Table 3. Ombuds Actions in Response to 214 visitors (multiple actions may be taken with any given visitor).

Action	# visitors	% visitors
Individual consultation / problem solving	157	73%
Referral to policy or campus agency / office	40	18.7%
Facilitation with third parties	39	18.2%
Notify campus office on behalf of visitor	0	0%
Inquiry to campus office on behalf of visitor	25	11.7%
Look into situation	22	10.3%
Provide upward feedback to administrators / leaders	16	7.5%

Individual consultation / problem solving: Listening, providing and receiving information, reframing issues, discussing options for addressing a visitor's concern rather than choosing for a visitor how to respond. Many visitors to an ombuds office are seeking an impartial listener to assist them in verbally expressing a concern. No further action may be desired or needed.

Referral to policy or campus agency / office: Ombuds are in a position to respond to confidential inquiries for referral to appropriate offices or services that are available on campus. The ombuds must be well versed in university complaint and notification procedures and have a working knowledge of the appropriate offices responsible for regulatory and compliance functions of the university. This information resource function compliments the ombuds practice of remaining up to date and knowledgeable of current university policies.

Facilitation with third parties: A visitor may seek the ombuds assistance in finding an intermediary in speaking with another party privately in resolving a conflict – sometimes shuttling between disputants and other times through a facilitated discussion similar to mediation. The intermediary may be the ombuds or another appropriate person. The ombuds may serve as a facilitator with groups when requested and appropriate or refer multiparty conflicts to facilitation services elsewhere on or off campus. The ombuds only serves in this role with the permission of the involved parties.

Formally notify campus office on behalf of visitor: Under rare circumstances involving safety or a visitor's inability to act without assistance, the ombuds may officially inform a campus office directly on behalf of a visitor wishing to surface allegations.

Inquiry to campus office on behalf of visitor: A visitor may wish to confidentially seek clarification regarding the meaning of a specific university policy or procedure.

Look into situation: The ombuds does not perform formal fact finding investigations. On rare occasions, the informal practice of looking into or following up on an issue at the request of a visitor wishing to remain anonymous may be undertaken with the understanding that the information may be used in advancing an informal resolution. When looking into a situation uncovers that a more formal investigation is warranted, the ombuds will inform the visitor of the appropriate office of responsibility.

Provide upward feedback to administrators / leaders: Throughout the year, the ombuds may report observations or serial related concerns that are tied to systemic conditions, ambiguities, or absence of policy. Such feedback is made while preserving visitor confidentiality.

Table 4. Total Issues Raised by Visitors – IOA Categories
 N= 1301 issues raised by 214 visitors (mean = 6.1 issues per visitor)

IOA Issues Category	% of total concerns
<u>Compensation & Benefits</u> : Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.	1.6%
<u>Evaluative Relationships</u> : Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)	45.0%
<u>Peer & Colleague Relationships</u> : Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory– employee or student–professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)	9.1%
<u>Career Profession and Development</u> : Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)	11.1%
<u>Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance</u> : 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.	4.8%
<u>Safety, Health, and Physical Environment</u> : Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.	1.9%
<u>Services/Administration Issues</u> : Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.	8.2%
<u>Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related</u> : Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.	16.4%
<u>Values, Ethics, and Standards</u> : 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.	1.9%
Total (N=1301)	100%

Table 5. Issues Raised by Number of Visitors (% of total visitors: n= 214) and subclassified as percentage of faculty, staff, graduate student, and other visitors raising concern (see appendix for descriptions of IOA categories)*

Selected Concerns Raised by Visitors	Total (n=214)	Faculty (n=53)	Staff (n=116)	Graduate Student (n=35)	Other (n=10)
1. Compensation & Benefits					
1a rate of pay, job classification	3.3% (7)	5.6%		8.6%	
1c benefits	2.8% (6)			5.7%	20%
2. Evaluative Relationships (supervisory)					
2a priorities, values, beliefs	12.6% (27)	9.4%	14.7%	8.6%	20%
2b disrespect, rude, crude, disregard of people	27.6% (59)	17.0%	32.8%	25.7%	30%
2c trust/integrity suspicions	13.6% (29)	9.4%	15.5%	11.4%	20%
2d reputation, rumors, gossip	28% (60)	20.8%	31.9%	25.7%	30%
2e communication, poor quality or quantity	32.2% (69)	24.5%	37.9%	28.6%	20%
2f bullying, abusive, coercive behavior	8.9% (19)	5.6%	9.5%	8.6%	20%
2g insensitivity to diversity	6.1% (13)	5.6%	6.9%		
2h punitive behaviors, retaliation	12.1% (26)	11.3%	12.9%	11.4%	
2j fairness of assignments, schedules	25.2% (54)	20.8%	29.3%	20.0%	
2k manner of feedback given or received	24.3% (52)	17.0%	25.0%	31.4%	30%
2l supervisor consultation	9.8% (21)	13.2%	12.1%		
2m performance appraisal	11.2% (24)	5.6%	16.4%		
2n unit/departmental climate, norms	10.7% (23)	9.4%	12.9%		
2o supervisor failure to address work issues	34.1% (73)	15.1%	44.0%	28.6%	40%
2q manner of disciplinary actions	3.7% (8)		5.2%		
2r inequity of treatment, favoritism	11.2% (24)	9.4%	13.8%	8.6%	
3. Peer and Colleague Relationships					
3a priorities, values, beliefs	7.0% (15)	13.2%	6.0%		
3b disrespect, rude, crude, disregard of people	9.3% (20)	5.6%	12.9%		
3c trust/integrity suspicions	5.6% (12)	9.4%			
3d reputation, rumors, gossip	13.1% (28)	22.6%	11.2%		
3e communication, poor quality or quantity	9.3% (20)	11.3%	10.3%		
3f bullying, abusive, coercive behavior	3.7% (8)		5.2%		

3g	diversity related	3.7% (8)	5.6%			
3h	punitive behaviors, retaliation	2.8% (6)		5.2%		
4. Career Progression and Development						
4a	job application selection recruitment	3.3% (7)		5.2%		
4b	job description after new position	9.8% (21)		13.8%		
4c	involuntary transfer/change of assignment	4.7% (10)		6.9%		
4d	tenure/position security/ambiguity	7.0% (15)	9.4%	6.0%	8.6%	
4e	ability to achieve promotion, tenure	21.0% (45)	13.2%	14.7%	51.4%	30%
4f	rotation/duration of assignment	4.2% (9)	5.6%			
4g	resignation	5.6% (12)			14.3%	
4h	disputed termination, nonrenewal	5.6% (12)			13.6%	30%
4j	Position elimination	3.3% (7)				
5. Legal, Regulatory, Compliance						
5b	business, financial practices	6.1% (13)	9.4%	5.2%		
5c	harassment	3.7% (8)	7.5%			
5d	discrimination, different treatment	3.3% (7)	5.6%			
5e	disability, accommodation	4.2% (9)		5.2%		
5h	Privacy, security of information	5.1% (11)	9.4%			
6. Safety, Health, Physical Environment						
6a	meeting safety requirements	3.7% (8)		7.8%		
7. Services & Administrative Actions (including external)						
7a	quality of service, accuracy, thoroughness	5.1% (11)			22.9%	
7b	responsiveness, timeliness	9.3% (20)	5.6%	6.0%	17.1%	
7c	decisions, application of rules (non-disciplinary)	26.2% (56)	30.2%	17.2%	40.0%	60%
7d	behavior of service provider(s)	7.9% (17)	9.4%	6.0%	11.4%	
8. Organizational, Strategic, Mission Issues						
8a	technical management of mission	11.2% (24)	11.3%	12.9%		
8b	leadership, management decisions	15.9% (34)	9.4%	21.6%		30%
8c	use/abuse or positional power/authority	14.0% (30)	15.1%	14.7%	8.6%	20%
8d	communication re strategy, mission	6.5% (14)	9.4%		8.6%	
8e	restructuring and relocation	6.1% (13)	13.2%	7.8%		
8f	climate, morale, capacity to function	10.3% (22)		12.9%	8.6%	
8g	adaptability of unit to stated changes	13.6% (29)	13.2%	16.4%		

8i	Data methodology interpretation of results	4.7% (10)				
8h	priority setting and funding	6.5% (14)		8.6%		
8j	inter-organizational work territory	11.2% (24)	11.3%	12.9%		
9. Values, Ethics & Standards						
9a	applicability or lack of conduct codes	2.8% (6)				
9b	values, culture of the organization	4.7% (10)	9.4%			

* As a means of protecting visitor anonymity, subcategories not listed or when no data are provided indicate either no issues were raised in the subcategory or that less than 5% of subclassified visitors raised these types of issues.

Ombuds Commentary:

The first annual report of the UConn Ombuds Office provides a profile of activity that is similar to reports from other college and university ombuds offices across the country. Perhaps this is to be expected; conflict is an inherent feature of university life. Universities are driven towards multiple and often competing missions, are populated by several constituencies with differing relationships with the university, exhibit formalities of shared governance while maintaining a hierarchical organizational structure, and are under perennial financial duress. Colliding goals among campus constituencies and university missions can breed complicated interest-based conflicts that are not always well suited for formalized grievance procedures typically found in academic institutions.

Notwithstanding these similarities to other universities, UConn is in the midst of a uniquely public dialogue about campus civility. Beyond the visitor-focused issues raised in the Ombuds office involving the notion of incivility, many of the conversations I've had this past year touched on the myriad formal and informal campus conversations about civility. The publication of a campus climate survey conducted by the Something's Happening Committee led to several open fora to discuss the survey report and the response to its recommendations from the President's Office. The President's Task Force on Civility and Campus Culture explored matters of civil behavior and speech on campus and made a series of recommendations to the administration. A forum inviting students' perspectives on the administration's response to the task force recommendations was held this spring. The Undergraduate Student Government is conducting a Core Values Survey and held an open Dialogue on Campus Culture this past November. In each of the open meetings surrounding these initiatives, the question of how to universally define incivility arose, as did the general consensus that incivility is a broad behavioral idea that encompasses a host of undesirable behaviors (including, of course, verbal and nonverbal communication).

Another topic that arose not only in the open dialogues but also in the Ombuds Office involved how to modify, influence or change uncivil conduct; in other words, how do we create a culture of civility. In the discussions, two themes arose relating to influencing people's conduct that seem important: First, empowering the hierarchy, or those in charge on campus, towards greater enforcement of civil conduct (i.e. ensuring consequences to those exhibiting incivility). Ideas included modifying performance appraisal metrics, training of supervisors on acceptable behavior (their own and that of their reports), and assigning disciplinary consequences for uncivil behavior. As for reinforcing norms through exacting consequences, one would need to consider the certainty speed, and severity of those consequences. Some approaches to discipline suggest that the severity of meted discipline is least important as long as the certainty and swiftness of the response is attended to.¹ The second theme focused on empowering bystanders to set standards of acceptable behavior and to step in or report unwanted behaviors as a means of establishing and maintaining norms. Hesitation in reporting witnessed unprofessional behaviors can be due to perceptions about our management and personal factors and these reasons can be thought of as barriers to effective bystander influence on the desired norms in our workplace.² In healthy social environments such as work environments, clarifying consequences for undesirable behavior and supporting bystander responses to unacceptable behavior mutually reinforce one another. Indeed, it can be said that an effective way to assess a cultural climate is to observe the way bystanders respond when cultural norms are violated.

The consideration of bystander responses and administrative responses presupposes that consensus on a working definition of incivility is attainable and that some uncivil behaviors are not already addressed by other policies and standards currently in place. The definitional dilemma of civility also arose in my conversations with visitors and each of the open fora. From the perspective of an Ombuds, who works with people in addressing interpersonal problems in the work environment, the subset of uncivil behaviors here could be grouped as *unprofessional behaviors*. "Chunking" incivility in this manner gives a set of workable objectives in the workplace towards what can approach a universally accepted goal of a professional work environment.^a In reviewing the data from this years report, visitors raised 377 concerns (29% of total concerns raised) involving behaviors experienced or witnessed that could be considered uncivil from their perspective.^b Examples of incivility by peers or supervisors include bullying, rudeness, yelling, offensive remarks, gossip, and other verbal and nonverbal insults. This observation raises the question for each of these workplace settings, what is or should be the administrative response to episodes of unprofessional behavior and what do bystanders do when they observe unprofessional behaviors?

One example would be the aspiration for supervisors and managers to have thoughtful, proactively articulated and equitably applied approaches for responding

^a Though not all unprofessional behaviors in the workplace are necessarily uncivil, any uncivil behavior in the work environment could be considered unprofessional.

^b I am referencing the issues assigned to the following IOA reporting categories in this report: 2b,2d,2f,2g,2h,2n,2r,3b,3d,3f,3h,5c,5d,7d, and 8c.

to unprofessional behaviors in the workplace that are consistent with practices across all units on campus.³ Empowering bystanders to report or say something when witnessing unprofessional behaviors would mean thoughtfully examining the barriers to responding.² Several supervisors in the past year expressed how helpful it would be to have an offender's peers more involved in responding to workplace incivility and other unprofessional conduct. Perhaps finding ways to acknowledge that such bystander behavior will be supported is all that some may need.^c

This commentary would be incomplete without the reminder that the issues of workplace incivility are not unique to UConn or even ubiquitous across campus. Among the first hand accounts of workplace incivility, other Campus Climate Survey respondents described a great deal of satisfaction with the civility in their work environments and the behavior of their supervisors and peers. This reminder is not to suggest complacency but rather to frame the question the campus seems to be asking as *How can we become a more civil campus?* and secondly to realize that some of the answers may be right here on campus in those areas that are working well. What happens in those civil workplaces when uncivil behaviors occasionally occur? What is the supervisory response? How do peer witnesses respond and why are they confident about responding or reporting?

In Emerging Systems for Managing Workplace Conflict, the authors describe the manner in which institutions and their employees adapt in order to manage organizational conflict.⁴ In *Contend* organizations, there is reliance on formal grievance systems or litigation and the organization features mostly formal offices and resources prepared for adjudicating outcomes to problems. *Settle* organizations rely more on negotiation and facilitation when conflicts are unresolved and resources such as mediation are more commonly used practices. *Prevent* organizations are concerned with addressing conflicts early and preventing their escalation into fulminant disputes. *Prevent* institutions typically have a broad array of conflict management services, multiple access points where individuals engage the system, both rights-based and interest-based options, and application of the system across all constituents and populations. Today, UConn is a campus that is actively engaged in a self reflective conversation about campus civility, has embarked this summer on a new and innovative supervisor training program intended to involve all supervisors on campus in the next few years, has unveiled an Ombuds Office for employees and graduate students to address problems and conflicts affecting their work, has reorganized graduate students services within the Graduate School in order to promote a *graduate student community*, and has promoted a set of endorsements and responses to changes advocated by both grass roots employee committees like the Something's Happening Committee and the Presidential Task Force on Civility and

^c The referenced article from the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association presents explanations why people who observe unacceptable behavior hesitate to act or come forward. Explanations include: fear of loss of relationships, loss of privacy, fear of unspecified "bad consequences" or retaliation, and insufficient evidence. Notably, these explanations come from supervisors as well as peer witnesses. Many of the accounts relayed by three respected ombudsmen with decades of experience in the higher education setting were similar to those voiced in the UConn Ombuds Office this past year.

Campus Culture. At a time when the programmatic changes on campus are tuned to the ambitions of Next Generation Connecticut, UConn seems just as intent on improving its climate and management of campus conflict. When change happens in an organization, we often point to some metric or outcome to signify the change is complete. In retrospect though, change in any institution really begins when the right questions are asked. For culture to change, asking the question *How can we become a more civil campus?* seems like a pretty good beginning.

References

- 1 Kleiman MAR. *Smart on Crime*. Democracy Journal. 2013 (Spring); 28:51-63.
- 2 Rowe M, Wilcox L, Gadlin H. Dealing with – or Reporting – Unacceptable Behavior. Journal of the International Ombudsman Association. 2009; 2(1): 52-64.
- 3 Hickson GB, Pichert JW, Webb LE, et al. *A Complementary Approach to Promoting Professionalism: Identifying, Measuring, and Addressing Unprofessional Behaviors*. Acad Med. 2007; 82:1040–1048.
- 4 Lipsky DB, Seeber RL, Fincher RD (2003). *Emerging Systems for Managing Workplace Conflict*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

1. Compensation & Benefits

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.

- 1.a Compensation (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)
- 1.b Payroll (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)
- 1.c Benefits (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)
- 1.d Retirement, Pension (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)
- 1.e Other (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above sub-categories)

2.m Performance Appraisal/Grading

(job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)

- 2.n Departmental Climate (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility.)
- 2.o Supervisory Effectiveness (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)
- 2.p Insubordination (refusal to do what is asked)
- 2.q Discipline (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)
- 2.r Equity of Treatment (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)
- 2.s Other (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

4. Career Progression and Development

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)

- 4.a Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)
- 4.b Job Classification and Description (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)
- 4.c Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)
- 4.d Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories)
- 4.e Career Progression (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)
- 4.f Rotation and Duration of Assignment (non-completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)
- 4.g Resignation (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)
- 4.h Termination/Non-Renewal (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)
- 4.i Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)
- 4.j Position Elimination (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)
- 4.k Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)
- 4.l Other (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above sub-categories)

2. Evaluative Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)

- 2.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 2.b Respect/Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 2.c Trust/Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 2.d Reputation (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 2.e Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 2.f Bullying, Mobbing (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 2.g Diversity-Related (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 2.h Retaliation (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 2.i Physical Violence (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 2.j Assignments/Schedules (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)
- 2.k Feedback (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)
- 2.l Consultation (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)

- 3.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 3.b Respect/Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 3.c Trust/Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 3.d Reputation (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 3.e Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 3.f Bullying, Mobbing (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 3.g Diversity-Related (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 3.h Retaliation (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 3.i Physical Violence (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 3.j Other (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

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.

- 5.a **Criminal Activity** (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)
- 5.b **Business and Financial Practices** (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)
- 5.c **Harassment** (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)
- 5.d **Discrimination** (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc. [being part of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category – applies in the U.S.])
- 5.e **Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation** (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)
- 5.f **Accessibility** (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)
- 5.g **Intellectual Property Rights** (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)
- 5.h **Privacy and Security of Information** (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)
- 5.i **Property Damage** (personal property damage, liabilities)
- 5.j **Other** (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

- 6.a **Safety** (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for training and equipment)
- 6.b **Physical Working/Living Conditions** (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)
- 6.c **Ergonomics** (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)
- 6.d **Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)
- 6.e **Security** (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying "compromise of classified or top secret" information)

- 6.f **Telework/Flexplace** (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)
- 6.g **Safety Equipment** (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)
- 6.h **Environmental Policies** (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)
- 6.i **Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance** (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)
- 6.j **Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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7. Services/Administrative Issues

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

- 7.a **Quality of Services** (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)
- 7.b **Responsiveness/Timeliness** (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)
- 7.c **Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules** (impact of non-disciplinary decisions, decisions about requests for administrative and academic services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)
- 7.d **Behavior of Service Provider(s)** (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)
- 7.e **Other** (any services or administrative issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

- 8.a **Strategic and Mission-Related/ Strategic and Technical Management** (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)
- 8.b **Leadership and Management** (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)

- 8.c **Use of Positional Power/Authority** (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)
- 8.d **Communication** (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)
- 8.e **Restructuring and Relocation** (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g. downsizing, off shoring, outsourcing)
- 8.f **Organizational Climate** (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)
- 8.g **Change Management** (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)
- 8.h **Priority Setting and/or Funding** (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)
- 8.i **Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results** (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)
- 8.j **Interdepartment/Interorganization Work/Territory** (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)
- 8.k **Other** (any organizational issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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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.

- 9.a **Standards of Conduct** (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)
- 9.b **Values and Culture** (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)
- 9.c **Scientific Conduct/Integrity** (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)
- 9.d **Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8** (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)
- 9.e **Other** (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above sub-categories)
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INTERNATIONAL
OMBUDSMAN
ASSOCIATION

IOA STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

PREAMBLE

The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.

Each Ombudsman office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE

- 1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.
- 1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.
- 1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman's direct observation.
- 1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.
- 1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

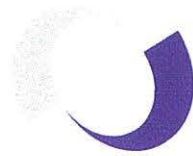
- 2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.
- 2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.
- 2.3 The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.
- 2.4 The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman's neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.
- 2.5 The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.
- 2.6 The Ombudsman helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following: The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual's express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman 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 Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.
- 3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.
- 3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor's contact with the Ombudsman or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.
- 3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.
- 3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.
- 3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.
- 3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.
- 3.8 Communications made to the ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the ombudsman may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

INFORMALITY AND OTHER STANDARDS

- 4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.
- 4.2 The Ombudsman as an informal and off-the-record resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.
- 4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.
- 4.4 The Ombudsman supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.
- 4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.
- 4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.
- 4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.
- 4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.



INTERNATIONAL
OMBUDSMAN
ASSOCIATION

IOA CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE

The IOA is dedicated to excellence in the practice of Ombudsman work. The IOA Code of Ethics provides a common set of professional ethical principles to which members adhere in their organizational Ombudsman practice.

Based on the traditions and values of Ombudsman practice, the Code of Ethics reflects a commitment to promote ethical conduct in the performance of the Ombudsman role and to maintain the integrity of the Ombudsman profession.

The Ombudsman shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the organization he or she serves, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of those organizations' practices, processes, and policies.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

INDEPENDENCE

The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

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.

CONFIDENTIALITY

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.

INFORMALITY

The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.

University of Connecticut (UConn) Ombuds Office: Office Charter: ¹

I. Introduction

The UConn Ombuds Office provides resources and assistance to individuals seeking the informal resolution of workplace problems in a confidential, informal, and independent manner. The Ombuds Office is designed to be a confidential, neutral resource where staff, faculty, administrators, and graduate students can go for assistance in identifying available options, facilitating productive communication, and surfacing responsible concerns regarding university policies and practices. The role and authority of the Ombuds² are established by the Office of the President, but the services of the Ombuds Office are neither directed nor controlled by the President. Further, other than as explained below, communications made to the Ombudsman are not shared with UConn or any of its officials. This Charter defines the role, privileges, and responsibilities of the UConn Ombuds Office.

II. Purpose and Scope of Services

The Ombuds provides informal dispute resolution services to UConn faculty, administrators, graduate students, and professional and staff employees.¹ The Ombuds Office is a place where these constituents can seek guidance regarding workplace problems or concerns at no cost and without fear of retaliation. Consultation with the Ombuds is entirely voluntary and may not be compelled by the University or an employee.

To the extent permitted by law, the Ombuds Office receives questions and concerns about individual situations or broader systemic issues and keeps them confidential. The response of the Ombudsman is tailored to the dynamics of the situation and the nature of the concerns. The Ombudsman will listen, make informal inquiries or otherwise review matters received, offer resolution options, make referrals, and informally mediate disputes independently and impartially. The Ombudsman will assist individuals in reaching resolutions that are consistent with the stated ideals, objectives and policies of UConn.

Services offered by the Ombuds Office supplement, but do not replace, other more formal processes available to university employees and graduate students. The Ombudsman serves as an information and communication resource. The Ombuds also is a catalyst for institutional change for the University through reporting of trends and identifying opportunities to enhance policies and procedures. The Ombudsman has no authority to impose remedies or sanctions. Nor does the Ombuds have the authority to enforce, make exceptions to, or change any UConn policy, rule, or procedure.

¹ Undergraduate students may use services provided by the Division of Student Affairs, such as the Office of Student Services and Advocacy.

² The terms "ombudsman" and "ombuds" are considered synonymous and are used interchangeably throughout this document.

Services of the Ombuds Office include but are not limited to:

Providing individual problem assistance services

- Listening impartially to concerns and providing a confidential place to collaboratively explore problems
- Developing options for informal approaches to resolving concerns
- Pointing employees and graduate students toward available services and resources and obtaining applicable information, including university policies, procedures, and materials
- Exploring early problem solving approaches as a means of avoiding escalation of conflicts and empowering individuals to find their own solutions to problems when appropriate
- Coaching and training and/or referral to resources on communication and interpersonal relationship skills in the workplace

Providing conflict resolution services

- Facilitating communication between parties during conflict
- Serving as facilitator for group problem solving and consensus development
- Assisting groups in the design and implementation of collaborative decision making processes
- Mediating and advising mediation as an informal conflict resolution process
- Alerting individuals or groups to available formal channels for conflict resolution

Serving the UConn campus community

- Identifying observed trends or problems areas
- Providing feedback relating to changes in policies or procedures
- Educating and informing the campus community about conflict resolution through presentations and office literature
- Modeling fairness, equity, inclusion, and civility in carrying out duties

The Ombuds Office will publish an annual report that will describe the activities of the office and aggregate data on the concerns raised at the office in a manner that protects the identity of visitors.

Receiving Notice for the University

The Ombuds Office does not receive or record complaints on behalf of the University of Connecticut and the Ombuds is not designated by the University as an individual authorized to receive reports of any violations of university policy or the law.

THEREFORE, COMMUNICATIONS TO THE OMBUDS OFFICE REGARDING POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF UNIVERSITY POLICIES OR UNLAWFUL PRACTICES DO NOT CONSTITUTE NOTICE TO UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT. Any such information shared with the Ombuds Office is not shared with the University. This allows the Ombuds to preserve the confidential and impartial nature of the office. If an individual discloses information that might evidence a violation of University policy or unlawful activity, the Ombuds will provide information necessary to permit the individual to make an official report to the University and, if requested, will assist the individual in making such report.

III. Standards of Practice

The Ombuds aspires to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) as a neutral party to promote fair practices and foster integrity and timeliness in the administration of University policies and practices that may affect faculty, staff and graduate students. The IOA's tenets require that ombuds function independently of their organization, be confidential and neutral, and limit the scope of their services to informal means of dispute resolution. The IOA Standards are minimum standards, and the Ombudsman will strive to operate to "best practices" and in a way that serves the interests of the University community in a manner consistent with the law.

Independence

The Ombuds Office is designed to be free from direct University oversight or control. This independence is achieved primarily through reporting structure, neutrality and organizational recognition. The Ombudsman reports to the Office of the President but the President neither directs nor controls the day-to-day activities of the Ombuds Office, and the Ombuds does not share with the President or any other University official communications made in confidence to the Ombuds Office. The University's Ombuds provides programmatic leadership and direction for the office and is responsible for designing, implementing, operating and coordinating all aspects of the office. The Ombuds will exercise sole discretion over whether and how to act regarding individual matters or systemic concerns.

Confidentiality

The Ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence to the extent permitted by law. Typically, the Ombuds will not confirm communicating with any individual who has sought the services of the Ombuds Office or disclose any confidential information shared with the Ombuds Office without that individual's express permission. The Ombudsman may, however, disclose confidential information without consent when such disclosure is required by law or, in the judgment of the Ombudsman, there is an imminent risk of serious harm. The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal process, whether internal or external to the University, even if given permission by the individual who consulted with the Ombuds, unless otherwise required by law.

Neutrality

The Ombuds is neutral in his activities and does not act as an advocate for any participant to a dispute or visitor to the office. The Ombudsman impartially considers the interests and concerns of all persons involved in a situation with the aim of facilitating communication and assisting others in reaching mutually acceptable agreements that are fair and equitable, and consistent with the mission and policies of the University.

The Ombuds will not be assigned other roles, including assignment to university committees, that would compromise neutrality. The Ombuds will take all necessary steps to avoid involvement in matters where there may be a real or perceived conflict

of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when the Ombuds' personal or private interests, real or perceived, are at odds with his duties and obligations to the University, including his role as a neutral and independent ombudsman. The Ombuds may withdraw services or decline to look into a matter if he believes involvement would be inappropriate for any reason, including, but not limited to, requests for misuse of ombuds services, matters not brought in good faith, a conflict of interest, matters specified in existing union contracts, or when insufficient information is provided.

Informality

The Ombuds Office is a resource for informal dispute resolution only. The Ombuds does not formally investigate, arbitrate, adjudicate or in any other way participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative process or procedure, unless required to do so by law. Use of Ombuds Office services is completely voluntary; it is not a required step in any grievance process or any University or external complaint process.

To the extent permitted by law, the Ombuds does not create or maintain documents or records for the University about individual matters.

IV. Authority and Limits of the Ombuds

The Ombuds has the authority to discuss a range of options available to visitors, including both informal and formal procedures, and may make any recommendations he deems appropriate with regard to resolving problems or improving policies, rules, or procedures.

Further, while the Ombuds has no authority to direct or control the activities of any University official, employee, or graduate student, members of the University's administration are encouraged to make themselves accessible to the Ombuds.

The Ombuds refrains from significant involvement in issues that are specifically covered by contract between the University of Connecticut and any bargaining unit. However, the Ombuds is available to serve as an informal resource for union leadership or union employees for issues that are not governed by current contracts.

The Ombuds has no authority to bargain or negotiate with the University of Connecticut on behalf of any employee or with any employee or bargaining unit on behalf of the University. No interaction between the Ombuds Office and any University employee or graduate student constitutes "negotiating" or "bargaining". Rather, all communications with the Ombuds Office are for the sole purpose of discussing and working toward informal resolution of workplace concerns.

V. Retaliation for Using the Ombuds Office

UConn faculty, administrators, professional and staff employees, and graduate students have the right to consult the Ombuds Office without retaliation. Similarly, because consultation with the Ombuds is wholly voluntary and not a required step in

any process, formal or informal, internal or external, individuals will not be retaliated against for choosing to not consult the Ombuds.

Employees may access the Ombuds Office during their normal working hours but may be required to notify the applicable supervisor and receive approval to leave their assigned work area. Employees wishing to access the Ombuds Office without notifying a supervisor may use approved leave time, scheduled break time, or visit outside normal work hours. The Ombuds Office will be available to arrange flexible hours to meet with employees.
