1. General

Ombuds Services for Staff (Ombuds Services) is an independent, neutral, confidential, and informal resource that promotes constructive conflict management on campus. Ombuds Services provides informal dispute resolution and collaborative problem solving processes, free of charge, to all staff, their supervisors (including faculty supervising staff), and their coworkers. Ombuds Services operates in accordance with the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and applicable University policies and procedures.

2. Confidentiality

Ombuds Services shall not disclose the identity of a visitor or the substance of confidential or personally identifiable communications--whether written, spoken, or otherwise--unless the office:

- receives permission from a visitor to make a disclosure;
- determines there is imminent risk of serious harm to the visitor or to others; or
- is compelled or required by law to make the disclosure.

The University supports the confidentiality of Ombuds Services and encourages parties to make use of Ombuds Services to develop options for addressing their concerns.
3. Informal and Voluntary Resource

Ombuds Services provides informal assistance to voluntarily pursue constructive outcomes. A supervisor may require staff to schedule an initial visit with Ombuds Services. The visitor to Ombuds Services may then choose whether to pursue such services. The level of participation with Ombuds Services is determined by the visitor. Ombuds Services is not a required step in any formal processes at the University; it supplements, but does not replace, formal processes (such as disciplinary actions).

4. Responsibilities and Authority

Ombuds Services tailors its responses to each visitor’s concerns and questions based on the particular dynamics of a situation. Services provided by Ombuds Services may include:

- visits, or private conversations, with a neutral ombuds who will listen and may help develop options for problem solving;
- referrals to specific University offices or resources or to University policy for guidance in addressing the visitor’s situation;
- informal inquiries to gain a greater understanding of a situation;
- mediations or informal conversations facilitated by an experienced neutral party; and
- trainings on constructive conflict management skills and related topics.

Ombuds Services regularly informs University leadership about campus trends or systemic problems in a manner that protects confidentiality.

5. Limitations of Ombuds Services

Ombuds Services does not conduct formal investigations. It does not adjudicate disputes, issue findings, impose remedies or sanctions, or make decisions on behalf of the University, its administrators, or the Board of Regents. It does not take sides or advocate on behalf of any individual, University unit, or cause.

Disclosures to Ombuds Services of alleged violations of law or policy are not considered notice to the University, nor can the office accept formal complaints on behalf of the University. Visitors are encouraged to discuss any concern with Ombuds Services, and Ombuds Services can provide assistance and referral information about providing formal notice to the University of alleged violations.

While Ombuds Services can listen and provide visitors with information and assistance in constructive conflict management, visitors are solely responsible for deciding what actions they wish to take.

6. No Retaliation for Participation in Ombuds Services
Employees have the right to consult Ombuds Services without fear of retaliation or reprisal. Retaliation against an employee for raising an issue or participating in Ombuds Services is prohibited. Furthermore, discouraging or preventing employees from seeking Ombuds Services is inappropriate because it is contrary to the University’s intent of promoting constructive conflict management and resolution.

7. Recordkeeping

Ombuds Services does not keep permanent records regarding any individual. Any recordkeeping or note-taking related to a specific individual is used only as a temporary aid to help informally serve visitors. These informal records created by Ombuds Services are kept in the sole possession of the office, securely maintained, and destroyed in accordance with IOA standards.

Ombuds Services may create or maintain generic data, not attributable to specific visitors, for use in annual reporting and other similar purposes.

8. References

UAP 2200 ("Reporting Suspected Misconduct and Whistleblower Protection from Retaliation")

UAP 2240 ("Respectful Campus")

UAP 2720 ("Equal Opportunity, Non-discrimination, and Affirmative Action")

UAP 2730 ("Sexual Harassment")

UAP 2740 ("Sexual Violence and Sexual Misconduct")

UAP 3215 ("Performance Management")