



Report on the
Faculty Ombuds Office
July 2013- May 2014

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Submitted to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, S. Madden, S. Royce,
D. Breede, and to University Provost Ralph Byington*

June 17, 2014

Executive Summary

This is the seventh report from the Faculty Ombuds Office to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. It is intended to serve as an activities report of ombuds services and an evaluation of trends and issues affecting faculty with recommendations to the University for consideration towards positive change, representing the mission and goals of the institution. This report and earlier reports can be accessed at <http://www.coastal.edu/ombuds/reports.html>

Background

The Coastal Carolina University (CCU) Faculty Ombuds Office was established in March 2008 as a pilot at the recommendation of the Faculty Welfare and Development Committee, a standing committee of the Faculty Senate. Since that time the office has offered services to all faculty and Charmaine Tomczyk has served as Faculty Ombuds on a part-time basis since 2008 and has continued this role after her December 2012 retirement. She earned her certification as an Organizational Ombuds Practitioner (CO-OP_R) from the International Ombudsman Association in January 2012.

In the May 2012 Faculty Senate meeting, the Faculty Ombuds position was approved to become a permanent position effective December 2012. The approved motion stipulated that “the individual serving as Faculty Ombuds would serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms.” This faculty position administratively reports to the Provost and serves the Faculty Senate.

Ombuds services adhere to the International Ombudsman Association’s (IOA) Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and Best Practices (www.internationalombudsmanassociation.org). These include the principles of confidentiality, independence, impartiality and informality. The Ombuds Office is not a “place of notice” for official university reporting.

Activities

Consultations and Facilitations:

During 2013/2014 (July – May) there were 75 contacts made for ombuds services, a decrease over the previous year from 87. The bar graph below illustrates the variations over six years.

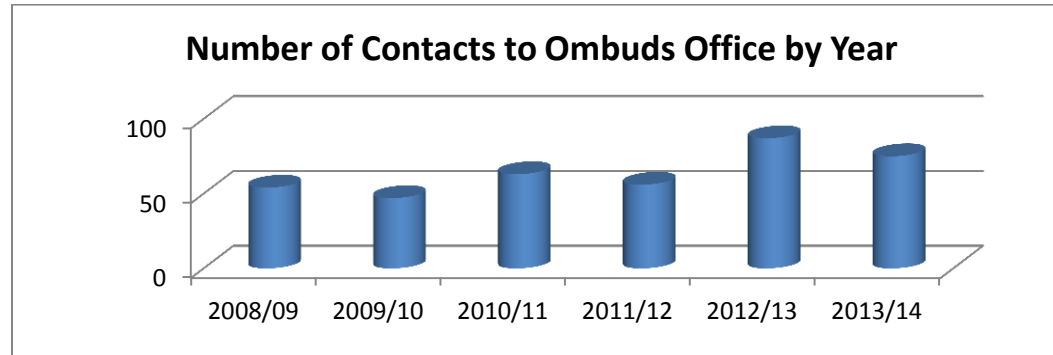


Figure 1

About five percent (5%) of all CCU faculty, or 34 individuals, consulted with the ombuds this fiscal year which is within the average percentage range of other comparable academic institutions. Approximately another ten percent (10%) attended ombuds informational sessions and topical seminars.

The three most frequently presented categories of issues as classified by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) were Evaluative Relationships (42 times), Career Progression and Development (41) and Peer and Colleague Relationships (40). The first two listed here were in the top three last year as well. Details regarding these issues are noted later in this report.

The types of ombuds assistance provided (in order of prevalence) continue to be:

- Individual consultations - offering strategies and options to help visitors resolve their issues and analyzing the entire scope and ramifications of the issues involved to develop effective strategies,
- General information - answering questions regarding policy, procedures and practices or referring faculty to policies and procedures relevant to the concerns expressed
- Group facilitation and/or informal mediation - meeting with two or more faculty members to analyze common concerns, - encouraging positive communication between or among colleagues and supervisors, or within departmental units, and
- Shuttle diplomacy wherein the Ombuds (with the permission of the visitor) serves as a go-between for third party intervention to clarify issues and facilitate resolutions.

Faculty Development / Informational Events:

Partnering with the CeTeal, the Faculty Ombuds presented an informational session on *A Healthy Workplace: conflict resolutions for abrasive treatments* in which she reviewed relevant university policies, state and federal laws, types of abrasive behaviors and strategies to deal with such treatments in the workplace. Her presentation was followed by a panel discussion with three faculty panelists, selected for their knowledge and interest in the topic. A Q&A segment concluded the 90-minute session.

The Ombuds promoted available services at the Fall 2013 General Faculty meeting. During Fall 2013 New Faculty Orientation, the ombuds presented a session explaining ombuds services, resources and ways to best access assistance. In Spring 2014, the ombuds staffed an EXPO table at the New Faculty Orientation, distributing brochures and general information about CCU ombuds services. Increasingly, new faculty members are more familiar with or aware of ombuds services and their beneficial role in the workplace. The recent Ombuds survey showed 48% of respondents found out about the ombuds office through university or college meetings. Forty percent (40%) found out through New Faculty Orientation.

Campus Service:

The Ombuds presented a session entitled *Strategic Directions for Resolving Conflicts* at the 2014 Celebration of Inquiry Conference. Attended by approximately 60 faculty, staff, students and community members, this 75-minute session explored the models and mapping for analyzing, diagnosing and resolving conflicts which prompted several good questions and discussion from the audience members..

The Ombuds continued to participate in the CCU Anti-Bullying Working Group and continues to pursue reliable methods of measuring and assessing campus climate. Some members of the group are preparing a campus survey instrument to gather relevant data about bullying and related behaviors. It is scheduled to be administered next academic year.

Creation of Office Charter:

The International Ombudsman Association lists an Ombuds Office Charter as a best practice and highly recommends that all ombuds offices create one. The Charter is an agreement between an organization (in this case the University) and their ombuds office that codifies roles and responsibilities of the ombuds and establishes a shared understanding of how the office functions within the organization. The creation of a Charter was one of the recommendations made in the previous Ombuds Report. The CCU Ombuds Office Charter was drafted by the ombuds this year and subsequently reviewed, revised, endorsed and signed by the Provost, the Faculty Senate Chair and the University Counsel. It is available on the ombuds website <http://www.coastal.edu/ombuds/charter.html>

Satisfaction Survey:

The annual spring Faculty Ombuds survey administered by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analysis yielded 96 respondents compared to 103 respondents last year. The Spring 2014 Ombuds survey showed 95.5% of respondents were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the services provided. Eighty-five percent of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that CCU faculty benefit from the services of an ombuds. The results of this survey (without the “comments section” so as to insure anonymity and confidentiality) are noted in the appendix to this report.

Ombuds Training:

The faculty ombuds “attended” three IOA webinars entitled “Conflict Styles and Approaches”, ”Strategies for Analyzing Cultural Components in Conflict” and “Conflict Coaching Models and Process.” The ombuds also attended four IOA radio podcasts from May

through October 2013 on topics such as reactive and targeted violence, ombuds services and EAP (employee assistance programs), various ombuds career experiences, and starting an ombuds program. The ombuds also participated in a higher education webinar, "Tools and Strategies for Fostering a Civil Work Environment."

Through the IOA mentorship program, the CCU faculty ombuds continued to mentor a new academic ombuds in a New England higher education institution; resulting in bi-monthly contacts by phone or email on a variety of topics, such as bullying, relationships with other university offices, grievance policies, faculty collaborations and sexual harassment (Titles IX and VII), among other topics. These discussions have been helpful to the practices of both mentee and mentor.

Recommendations

- A. It is recommended that the University continue its efforts to conduct a campus wide Faculty Climate Survey to measure and assess the prevalence of bullying, abrasive behaviors and the general levels of understanding, responsibilities and rights of those involved in such conduct. The survey instrument should be comparable to national norms and results should be compared to peer, aspirant or similar Carnegie institutions. Further, a faculty anti-bullying conduct policy is NOT recommended at this point (as was done recently at the University of South Carolina (USC)), especially in light of the lack of reliable campus data on the prevalence of such behavior throughout the CCU campus, involving, or witnessed by, faculty. If it is later determined that a policy is warranted, then the USC policy could serve as a model. According to the IOA, bullying in the workplace starts out "as minor incivilities but can escalate and spiral into bullying behaviors that have profound effects on individuals and on organizational culture." This issue deserves further study.
- B. The development of a Faculty Blog has been announced by the Provost as another vehicle by which faculty can lodge concerns, questions and comments on workplace issues. It is recommended that a faculty team be formed to establish guidelines, protocol and procedures for effective development of the site and include the faculty ombuds as a resource person on the team. The team could oversee regular monitoring of the Blog entries, evaluate its effectiveness and follow up on critical issues.
- C. Now that an Office Charter has been created, it should serve as the basis for the formation of a three-year strategic plan focusing on marketing and publicizing CCU ombuds services, educating constituents on conflict resolution, expand strategic options for problem solving and augment opportunities for the development of the Ombuds Office services.
- D. It is recommended that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Provost begin the process of identifying a faculty ombuds for FY 2015/16, as the current ombuds's term will end June 30, 2015. If the previous procedures are applied, then a call for internal candidates would be distributed in fall 2014 semester and subsequent interviews of final candidates by the Faculty Senators would be scheduled for Spring with a July 1, 2015 start date. Further it is recommend that the Senate re-consider its initial term limits for the ombuds (two consecutive 3-year terms; see page 2, paragraph three of this report). If the position is one-third time, it would take three years to satisfy eligibility to apply for IOA certification, which is a strongly recommended certification for this position.

July 2014 - May 2014 Activities

I. Contacts

One contact is defined as one visit to the Ombuds Office, an email to the ombuds, a phone call or another communication to the ombuds. Compared to eighty-seven (87) contacts last year, this year there were seventy-five (75) contacts, excluding June 2014 for early reporting. This year's contacts represented individuals from all colleges, the library and other academic offices. The distribution of contacts by unit is similar to past years. See Figure 2 below. Figure 3 below shows the distribution by Unit of total hours provided to faculty contacts.

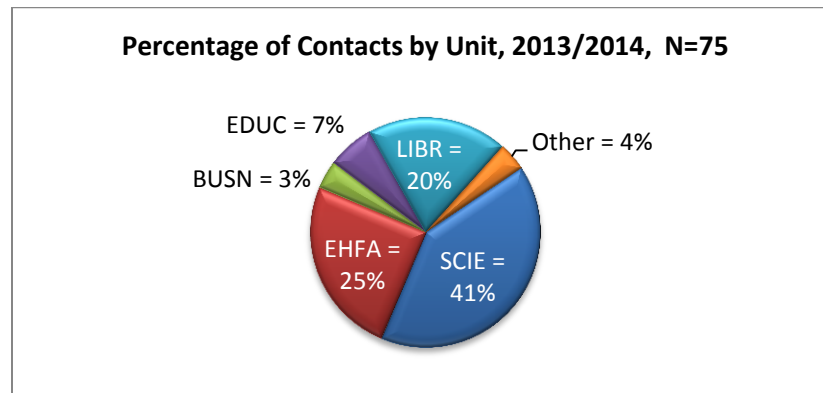


Figure 2

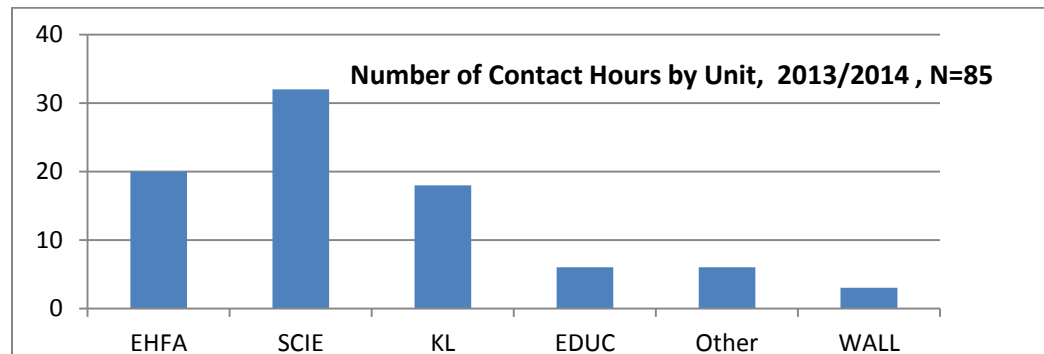


Figure 3

The prevalent method of contacting the ombuds was by visiting the office in Sands Hall room 111. Whenever possible and most convenient, face-to-face meetings are the ombuds's preferred method of contact. Because email and voicemail are not considered confidential methods,

and knowing that phone messages are linked to the email system, faculty members are encouraged to leave messages that simply provide their names, numbers and convenient times for a return call.

While the Ombuds Office may seem far from the hub of campus, its location is ideal for inconspicuous meetings that require confidentiality and anonymity. Visitors have no difficulty finding the office. The Other data category tracked in Figure 4 below includes meetings elsewhere on and off campus. Whichever method of contact is used, the ombuds's response time is typically within 24 hours, or sooner.

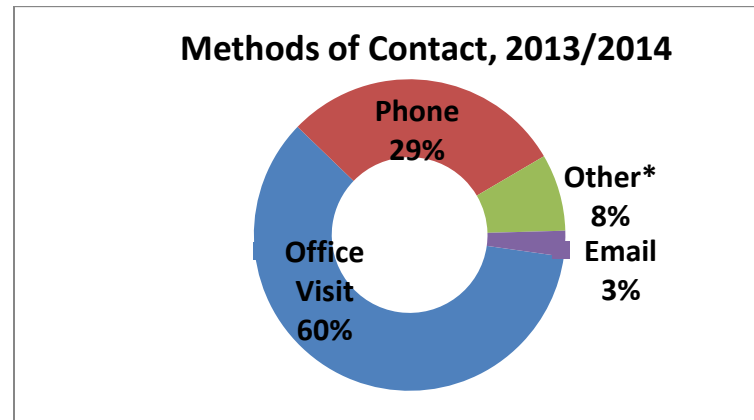


Figure 4

The Ombuds Office website pages www.coastal.edu/ombuds were regularly updated to include links to other CCU and external resources as well as new book materials added to the ombuds bibliography available at the site with books available in Sands Hall 111 and some in the Kimbel Library collections (with call numbers provided). The site now includes the Ombuds Office Charter.

II. Topics of Concern / Issues Presented

In keeping with the IOA Principles and Standards, no individuals' names, detailed records, or related documents are maintained on any contacts, cases or issues presented to the ombuds. Statistics are collected as aggregate data to identify trends or patterns that may demonstrate needs to be addressed in broader contexts.

The rubric used to categorize issues of concern is the *Uniform Reporting Categories of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA)*. These nine IOA broad categories are defined below in Figure 5. Individual contacts often contain multiple issues simultaneously and all are counted in the data presented here. Concerns relating to Evaluative Relationships continue to be the most frequently presented.

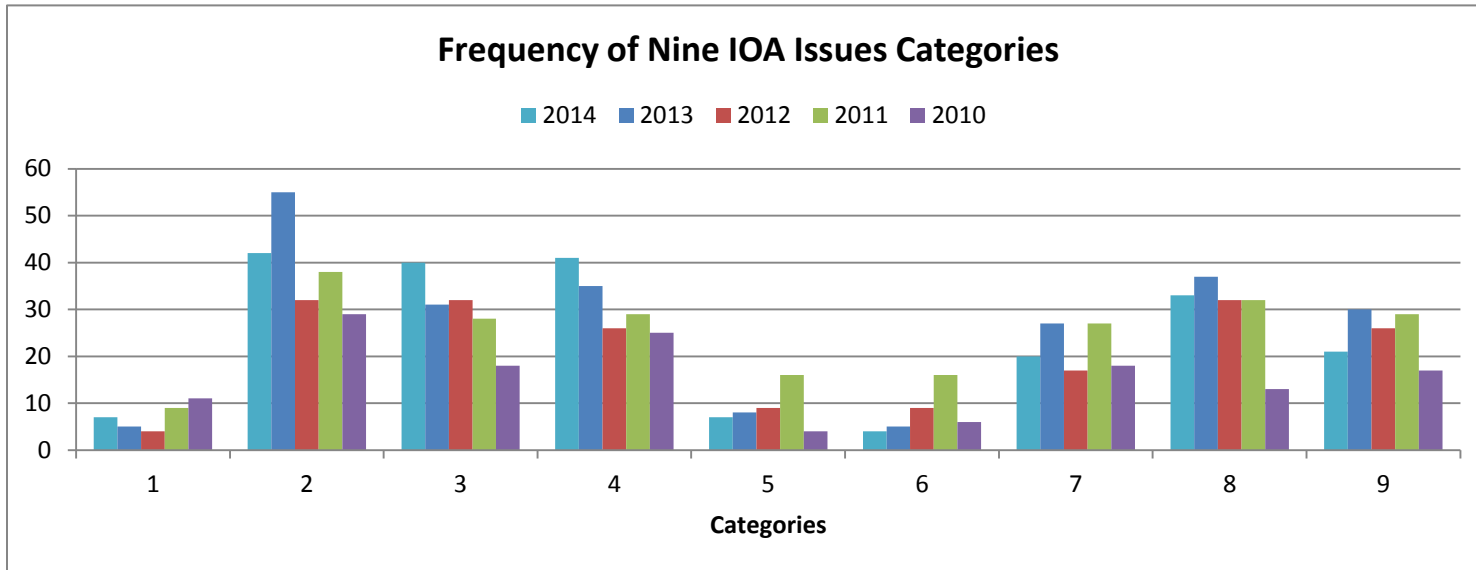


Figure 5

1. Compensation & Benefits (Presented 6 times)

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

Most frequent concerns: low base salaries compared to other faculty in the unit (compression) and to other comparable institutions; perceived inequities in application of the point system established within the college / unit; loss of state-supported health and other benefits in the summer when faculty resigns after spring semester; personal impacts of conversion of all 9-mo. pay cycles to 12-mo..

2. Evaluative Relationships (Presented 42 times)

Defined as: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. dean-department chair, department chair – faculty member and peer review groups - faculty member)

Most frequent concerns: abrasive disagreements between faculty members and supervisors regarding value of scholarly publications, campus and community service; department climate – lack of professional respect among and between Chair and faculty member(s) and/or among faculty members; inequity of treatment towards specific faculty (icing-out or disenfranchising); disagreements over performance appraisals; lack of recommendations for improved performance

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships (Presented 40 times; includes cases of bullying and/or mobbing.)

Defined as: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory–employee relationship (e.g., two faculty members within the same department or conflict involving members of a faculty group)

Most frequent concerns: unprofessional behaviors including misrepresentation of or exclusion from peer group meetings, yelling and harsh language in public areas; disrespectful or unfair treatment in written or verbal communication leading to distrust, loss of cooperation and integrity

4. Career Progression and Development (Presented 40 times)

Defined as: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about dismissals for cause and non-reappointment or tenure denial, as well as processes and decisions regarding entering and / or leaving a position or added responsibilities, (i.e., nature of and changes in current assignments, job security, and separation.)

Most frequent concerns: frequent changes or additions to job expectations and performance levels; not adhering to stated procedures and policies in 3-year reviews and P&T unit / college protocol; lack of clarity in some evaluative rubrics; lack of mentorship opportunities and insufficient travel funds for faculty and administrative (management and leadership) development. Multiple exit interviews conducted with faculty voicing inattentiveness by administration to deal with ineffective and often abrasive supervisors.

5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance (Presented 7 times)

Defined as: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanctions, etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse; federally mandated compliance requirements (such as Title IX, harassment, hostile work environment, active shooter protocol).

Most frequent concerns: perceived hostile work environment including abrasive, bullying treatment by colleagues and supervisors; incomplete mandatory training addresses reactive moves (after the fact) instead of teaching preventative measures to be proactive.

6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment (Presented 4 times)

Defined as: Questions, concerns, or issues about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

Most frequent concerns: work-related stress and work-life balance due to a pattern of unprofessional treatment; vehicular, bicycle and skateboard traffic hazards and pedestrian safety on or near campus.

7. Services/Administrative Issues (Presented 20 times)

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

Most frequent concerns: perceived arbitrary judgments by administrators who disregard faculty recommendations without rationale

8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related (Presented 33 times)

Defined as: Questions, concerns or issues that relate to the whole or some part of an organization's mission, goals, objectives and/or initiatives

Most frequent concerns: excessive use of positional power / authority to impose performance demands or perceived unfair sanctions (such as implementation of proposal on banked credit hours); lack of rationale expressed or without request for feedback before implementation; organizational and departmental climates contrary to “feel the teal” imitative.

9. Values, Ethics, and Standards (Presented 20 times)

Defined as: 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.

Most frequent concerns: shifts in values and campus culture; loss of centralized control leading to various interpretations of multiple policies within individual units

III. International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Activities

The IOA has over 800 active members of which about 230 are in the academic sector. This professional organization is committed to supporting ombuds worldwide through training, certification, networking, mentoring and guidance in standards, codes and best practices. Having obtained IOA Certification in January 2012 (CO-OP, Certified Organizational Ombuds Practitioner), the CCU faculty ombuds continues to collect Professional Development units as required for good standing and future re-certification.

The CCU faculty ombuds is registered as an IOA Mentor and has served as such since January 2013. Responsibilities include regular contact with her academic mentee (who is also a sole practitioner in the academic sector). As required by IOA, the ombuds contacts her mentee at least quarterly, often bi-monthly, to answer any ombuds related questions and concerns or to discuss ombuds standards of practices and academic trends that are evident in issues raised in the ombuds office. Her mentoring term ends July 2014.

Summary

Campus initiatives to improve and enhance campus climate, from the “Feel the Teal” service initiative to the Board of Trustees adoption of a Code of Ethical Conduct, clearly demonstrate a dedication to fulfilling the values upheld by CCU. Ombuds services also strive to reflect these values. With the current ombuds term ending June 2015, the process to select a successor to the position should begin Fall 2014.

Activities and services of the Faculty Ombuds Office continue to provide a benefit to CCU faculty and to exercise fairness, respect, integrity and confidentiality. The 2014 Ombuds Faculty survey confirms the satisfaction of faculty contacts to the office and its programs. Several faculty members used the office for informal exit interviews which continue to validate the campus issues and concerns raised among faculty. Faculty contacts to the Ombuds Office expressing concerns over evaluative relationships and colleague interactions continue to be areas of strong and frequent conflict. Monitoring related campus climate issues should be measured regularly through reliable surveys and other methods.

As faculty ombuds, I am grateful for the support of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Provost in making ombuds services available to all faculty and for adhering to the International Ombudsman Association principles and operations as represented in the newly created Charter for the ombuds office. It continues to be my privilege to assist in ombuds efforts and it is my hope that the office’s services will be sustained, utilized, and expanded based on the needs of the faculty.

**Appendix to Faculty Ombuds Report, 2014: Faculty Ombuds Online Survey
(responses without comments)**

Faculty Ombuds

Spring 2014

N=96

Have you contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office, either this academic year or in the past?		
	#	%
Yes	21	22.11%
No	74	77.89%

Are you familiar with the Faculty Ombuds Office and the services they provide? (Asked of the 74 respondents who answered that they have not contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	%
Yes	45	60.8%
No	29	39.2%

Overall, how satisfied are you with the services the Faculty Ombuds Office has provided you? (Asked of the 22 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	%
Very Satisfied	18	85.7%
Satisfied	2	9.5%
Neutral	1	4.8%
Dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0.0%

When did you contact the Faculty Ombuds Office? (Asked of the 22 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	%
During 2013/2014	16	76.19%
Prior to 2013	5	23.81%

How did you find out about the Faculty Ombuds Office? (Asked of the 67 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office or that they are familiar with the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	% of 67 respondents
Faculty colleague	14	20.9%
Faculty Senate	11	16.4%
New Faculty Orientation	26	38.8%
Ombuds brochure	6	9.0%
Ombuds website	4	6.0%
University or College meetings	32	47.8%
University news release	2	3.0%
Other	8	11.9%

*Percentages may not total to a 100 due to multiple responses.

Faculty Ombuds

Spring 2014

N=96

I've contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office and... (Asked of the 22 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)											
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Stongly Disagree		Not Applicable
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
I was able to get an appointment with the ombuds promptly after contact.	19	90.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2
I was able to meet with the ombuds for a reasonable amount of time.	17	81.0%	2	9.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2
The ombuds gave me the opportunity to express my concerns.	20	95.2%	1	4.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds seemed to understand my concerns.	20	95.2%	0	0.0%	1	4.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds provided me with valuable information to help me make my decisions.	16	76.2%	2	9.5%	1	4.8%	2	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds helped me identity and evaluate my options.	15	71.4%	3	14.3%	0	0.0%	2	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
The ombuds was courteous and respectful.	20	95.2%	0	0.0%	1	4.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds was neutral and fair.	20	95.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
I trust the ombuds to maintain my confidentiality.	20	95.2%	1	4.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0

Faculty Ombuds

Spring 2014

N=96

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: (Asked of the 67 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office or that they are familiar with the Faculty Ombuds Office.)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Coastal Carolina University faculty benefit from the services of an ombuds.	38	57.6%	19	28.8%	8	12.1%	1	1.5%	0	0.0%
I would refer to the Faculty Ombuds Office.	39	59.1%	16	24.2%	9	13.6%	2	3.0%	0	0.0%

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: (Asked of the 45 respondents who answered that they are familiar with the Faculty Ombuds Office.)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Although I have not used the Faculty Ombuds Office, if I needed their services, I would access them.	21	46.7%	16	35.6%	4	8.9%	2	4.4%	2	4.4%