



Report on the
Faculty Ombuds Office
July 2014 through May 2015

*Prepared by Charmaine Tomczyk, Faculty Ombuds and
Submitted to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, S. Madden, R. Smith,
D. Breede, and to University Provost Ralph Byington*

June 9, 2015

Executive Summary

This is the eighth report from the Faculty Ombuds Office to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Provost and Executive Vice President. This is my final report as ombuds and it is intended to serve as a yearly activities report, an evaluation of trends and issues affecting faculty, and my recommendations for consideration towards positive change for the faculty, the campus community and the ombuds office. 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 2008 the office has offered services to all faculty members and Charmaine Tomczyk has served as Faculty Ombuds on a part-time basis (and continued this role after her January 2013 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. In April 2015, following an internal search conducted by the Faculty, Welfare and Development Committee, voted by the Faculty Senators and approved by Provost Byington, Dr. Steve Madden, Professor of Communication was appointed Faculty Ombuds beginning July 2015.

Ombuds services at CCU strive to 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, as stated in its *Charter*, <http://www.coastal.edu/ombuds/charter.html>

Activities

Consultations and Facilitations:

During 2014/2015 (July through May) there were 87 contacts made for ombuds services which is slightly higher than the previous year. The bar graph below illustrates the numbers of contact each year over the seven-year period.

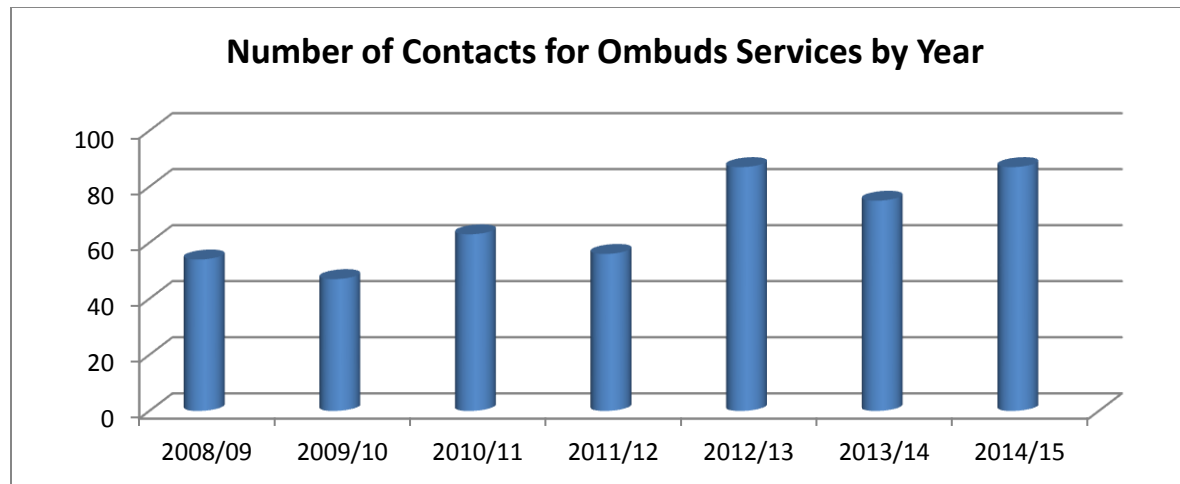


Figure 1

The three most frequently presented categories of issues as classified by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) for 2014/2015 were Peer and Colleague Relationships (46), Evaluative Relationships (36 times), and Values, Ethics and Standards (36 times). 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) continued to be:

- Individual consultations - offering strategies and options to help a visitor resolve his/her issues and analyzing the entire scope and ramifications of the issues involved to develop effective strategies and action plans,
- General information - answering questions regarding policy, procedures and practices or referring faculty to specific departments or policies and procedures relevant to their expressed concerns,
- Group facilitation and/or informal mediation - meeting with two or more faculty members to analyze common concerns, encouraging positive communication between and among colleagues and supervisors, or within departmental units for improved workplace relationships and productivity, 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 between individuals.

Faculty Development / Informational Events:

The Faculty Ombuds presented an informational session, entitled *Handling Conflict with Competency*, through CeTeal in Spring 2015 and presented an expanded version of this session at the CCU Academic Leadership Seminar in June 2015. This inaugural Seminar fills a longtime gap or omission in the training and development of new CCU mid-level administrators.

During Fall 2014 New Faculty Orientation, the Ombuds staffed an EXPO table 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 Spring 2015 Ombuds survey showed 84% of the 114 respondents found out about the ombuds office, largely through three methods: a faculty colleague, the faculty senate, or the new faculty orientation.

Campus Service:

The Ombuds contributed as a member of the ad hoc committee to review and revise the Faculty Manual. Several recommended revisions were forwarded to the Senate and subsequently approved, including a motion to create a standing committee of the Senate with this continuing purpose of reviewing and improving the Faculty Manual.

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 faculty members of the group are preparing a survey instrument to gather relevant data about bullying and related workplace behaviors.

The development of a Faculty/ Staff discussion Board was announced by the Provost as another vehicle by which faculty and staff can lodge concerns, questions and comments on workplace issues. To date the online Board has had minimal use and should be re-evaluated regularly for effectiveness.

The Ombuds assisted Eileen Soisson in Module 5: *Assisting with Difficult Situations* of the “Feel the Teal” initiative and developed case studies for participants’ use and discussion. The ombuds was invited by Associate Provost, Dr. John Beard, to present information about ombuds services and trends to the New Chairs Academy in January 2015.

Satisfaction Survey:

The annual spring Faculty Ombuds survey administered by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analysis yielded 114 respondents compared to 96 respondents the previous year. This Spring 2015 Ombuds survey showed that 80% of those who contacted the ombuds office last year were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the services provided. About one-third of these responded that if they had not used the ombuds office, then they would NOT have talked to anyone about the issue. Another third responded that they would have brought the issue up through a formal channel. Another 13% noted they would have left the University. The results of

this survey (without the “comments section” so as to insure anonymity and confidentiality) are noted in Appendix A of this report. Appendix B of this report compares five years of ombuds survey responses.

Ombuds Training:

The faculty ombuds “attended” two ADRHub webinars (from the Werner Institute of Creighton University) entitled, *Safety Planning – What Every Conflict Resolver Needs to Know* and *Mediation in the International Development Context*. The ombuds “attended” two IOA radio podcasts on topics of *Title IX and ombuds* and *Academic research in the ombuds field*. The ombuds is registered for a June 16th webinar on “*Communication Skills for Collaboration*.” These training sessions provide current, helpful information applicable to the daily work of ombudsry.

The CCU Ombuds was invited to serve as an IOA mentor for 2015/2016, but respectfully declined due to leaving the ombuds position in July. When IOA learned this ombuds was retiring, a second request to serve was offered stating that many IOA mentors are retired ombuds. While deeply appreciated, the offer to serve retained a negative response.

Recommendations

- A. Given that evaluative and peer relationships have been the highest areas of concern over several years, it is evident that effective communication is lacking, both verbal and written, among and between colleagues and supervisors. It is recommended that the University **establish a campus wide communication protocol** that sets a standard for regular and consistent communication in all units. The protocol might include guidelines for email communiques – both style and content - (especially as more online faculty and programs are developed), guidelines for conducting collaborative meetings, and respectful conversations; all of which uphold the CCU Code of Ethical Conduct and promote professional courtesy. The prevalence of bullying, abrasive behaviors and disrespectful treatment should be examined and sanctions enforced for such conduct. Perhaps the next CCU Strategic Plan could incorporate such a communication protocol suitable to our stated values and vision.

- B. A proposal to **expand the Ombuds Office services to staff (and then students)** was drafted and submitted to the Provost for consideration. Each year the ombuds has some requests from staff for ombuds services and the Faculty Ombuds has provided these. Conversations should continue to pilot the expansion proposal and assess its usage. Further, the IOA, the professional organization committed to supporting ombuds worldwide through training, certification, networking, mentoring and guidance in standards, codes and best practices, has been working on a professional **proposal to begin certifying ombuds offices. Once finalized and ratified by the organization, it is recommended that CCU pursue this certification.**

- C. To build trust and encourage transparency, it is recommended that the ombuds office work with other campus units to develop and provide personnel development training **to explore examples of and sanctions for violations of the CCU Code of Ethical Conduct**. This excellent document is a foundation and framework for a responsible, healthy workplace upholding ethical behavior. Unfortunately its interpretations and applications require more wide-reaching dialogue for better intervention. Further, examples of sanctions for violations of this Code (and the processes leading to sanctions and appeals) must be clearly written and explained. If the campus community currently does this for its students' Code of Conduct, then we should lead by example and clarify protocol for employees, too. Through these efforts, I believe our community will function more effectively and follow these codified CCU professional standards.
- D. It is recommended that the university expand its **mandatory training to include scenarios that focus on how to identify behaviors (cognitive and affective) that may lead to violence and how to take action to reduce an escalating scene or to seek intervention to reduce risk of harm**. A preventative approach may be as helpful as a checklist during the event or post-event. Also, creation and wide distribution of a preparedness plan and resources for this and related emergencies would be reassuring for the campus community (in combination with active shooter training). (Note: Information gained from the March presentation in Kline Hospitality Suite from the University of Central Florida's campus safety division was an excellent model.) Also, expanded instruction on Title IX that includes scenarios and case studies to exemplify appropriate action by "responsible persons" could be beneficial.

July 2014 - May 2015 Activities

I. Contacts

One contact is defined as one visit to the Ombuds Office; that may be an email to the ombuds, a phone call or another communication to the ombuds. This year there were eighty-seven (87) contacts, excluding June 2015 for early reporting. These contacts represented individuals from all colleges, the library and other academic offices. The distribution of contacts by unit varied compared to last year as illustrated in Figures 2a and 2b below.

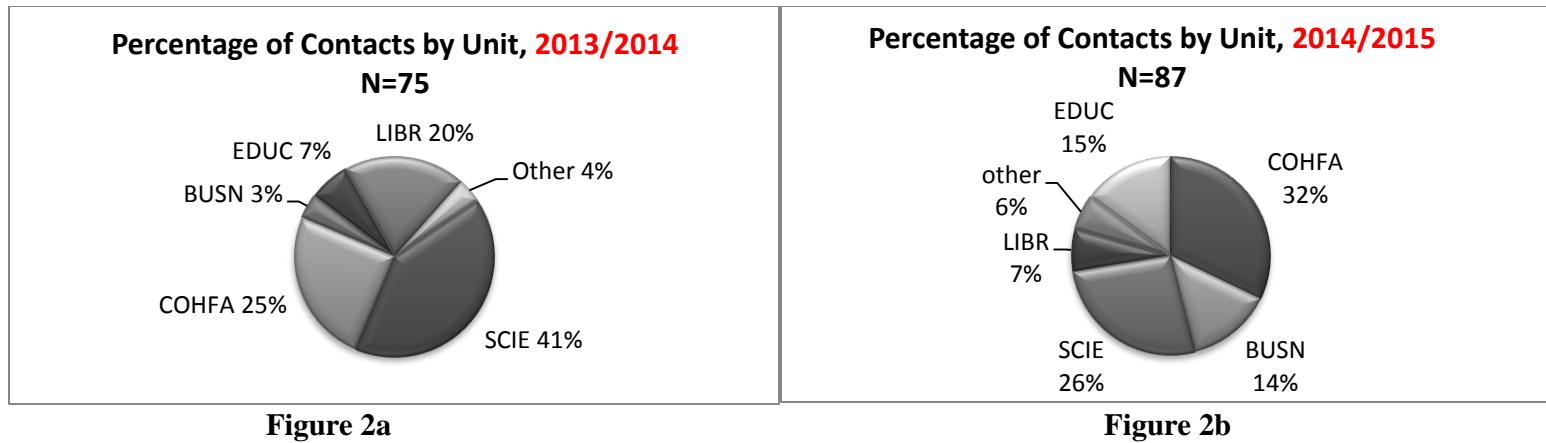


Figure 3 below shows the distribution by unit of total hours provided to faculty contacts.

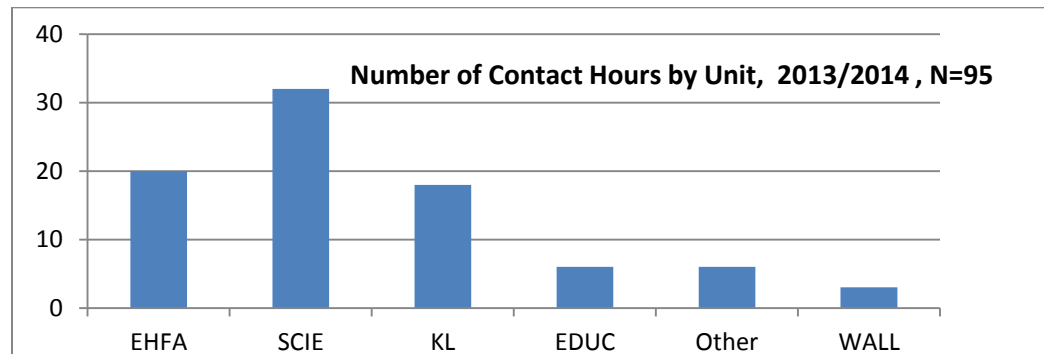


Figure 3

The prevalent method of contacting the ombuds continues to be visits to 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.

The Ombuds Office 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.

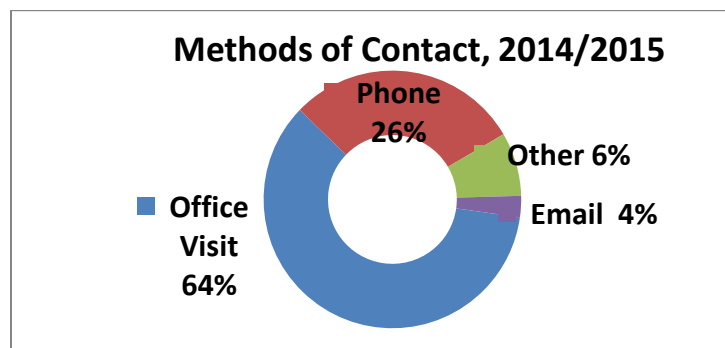


Figure 4

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

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 and their frequency is expressed in Figure 5. Individual contacts often contain multiple issues simultaneously and all are counted in the data presented here. Issue numbers 3 (Peer and Colleague Relationships), 5 (Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance), 6 (Safety, Health, and Physical Environment), and 9 (Values, Ethics, and Standards) show significant increases this year compared to the previous year.

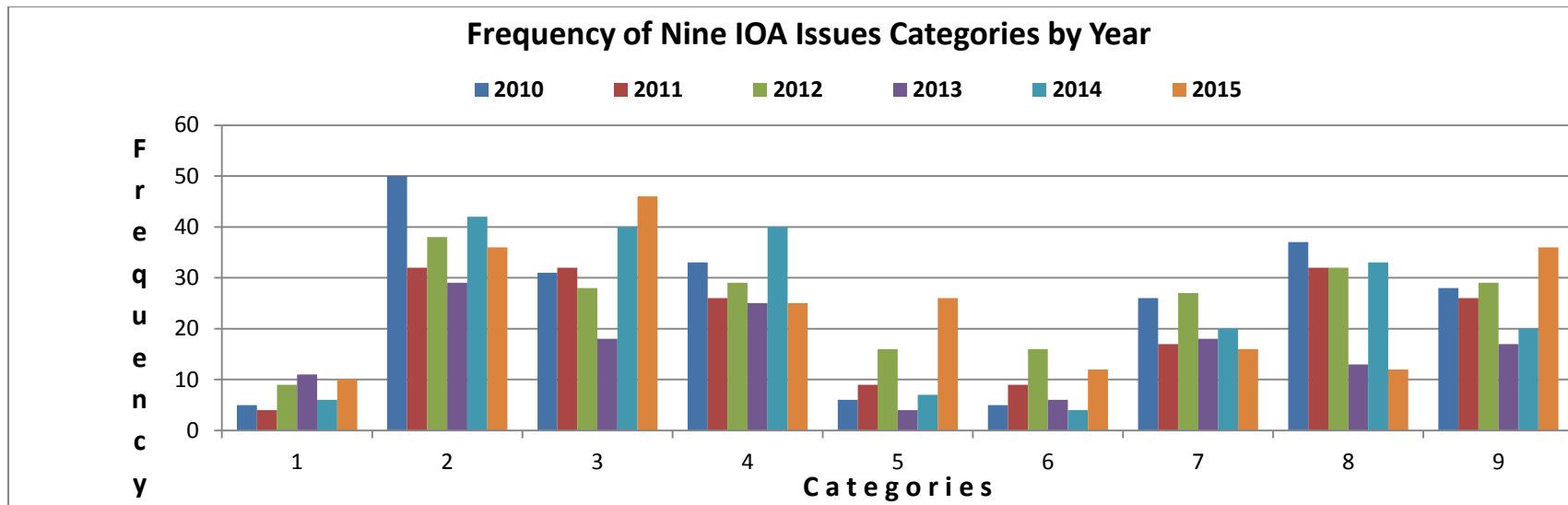


Figure 5

1. Compensation & Benefits - (Presented 10 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: delays in processing compensation paperwork; loss of state-supported health and other benefits in the summer when faculty leave employment in May; (COBRA option is expensive, especially for families). There is a consistent perception that other universities offer this summer benefit to their nine-month faculty.

2. Evaluative Relationships - (Presented 36 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: disagreements between faculty members and supervisors regarding performance appraisals and ratings; summative not formative reviews with little advice on improvements; department’s priorities are perceived to be misaligned with individual performance expectations and career progression; minimal timely feedback provided to faculty throughout year

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships - (Presented 46 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 disrespect and poor treatment, perceived ruthless competition; yelling and harsh language in public areas; avoidance of communication leading to mistrust, loss of cooperation and integrity

4. Career Progression and Development (Presented 25 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: career options after non-reappointment, especially when termination is immediate; 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 or absence of mentorship . Multiple exit interviews conducted with faculty voicing inattentiveness by administration to deal with ineffective and often abrasive supervisors and colleagues.

5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance (Presented 26 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: nearly ¼ of these concerns were perceived harassment; others were perceived hostile work environment including abrasive, bullying treatment by colleagues and supervisors

6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment (Presented 12 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; sick buildings causing allergy and related flare-ups; insufficient mandatory training addressing only reactive moves (such as, after the violation or incident) instead of teaching preventative measures to be proactive.

7. Services/Administrative Issues (Presented 16 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

8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related (Presented 12 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 and authority without faculty input prior to decisions; lack of rationale expressed or without request for feedback before implementation; negative organizational and departmental climates contrary to “feel the teal” initiative.

9. Values, Ethics, and Standards (Presented 36 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 due to rapid, perceivable unmanaged growth; no apparent sanctions imposed for violations of Code of Ethical Conduct

Summary

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 2015 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 from employees' viewpoints should be measured regularly through reliable surveys and other methods.

Serving as faculty ombuds for seven years, I am appreciative of the support from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Provost in making ombuds services available to all faculty. It is my sincere hope that the office's services will be sustained, utilized, and expanded based on the needs of the faculty and that the staff of CCU will be given the benefit of a staff ombuds – and eventually CCU students to have a student ombuds. With this comprehensive model, evident at many academic institutions, the CCU community will gain the advantages of ombuds services and extend service equitably to all of its members.

Appendix A to Faculty Ombuds Report, 2015: Faculty Ombuds Online Survey, Spring 2015 (Responses without comments)

Faculty Ombuds
Spring 2015
N=114

Have you contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office, either this academic year or in the past?		
	#	%
Yes	35	30.7%
No	79	69.3%

Are you familiar with the Faculty Ombuds Office and the services they provide? (Asked of the 79 respondents who answered that they have not contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	%
Yes	53	67.1%
No	26	32.9%

Overall, how satisfied are you with the services the Faculty Ombuds Office has provided you? (Asked of the 35 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	%
Very Satisfied	21	60.0%
Satisfied	7	20.0%
Neutral	4	11.4%
Dissatisfied	2	5.7%
Very Dissatisfied	1	2.9%

In what other ways did you find out about the Faculty Ombuds Office?
Discussions with Charmaine
HR
I've known about it from its inception.
Just in touch with campus goings on and was responsible for running the first election (wink, wink, nudge, nudge!).
Spoke with the Ombudsman informally.
Supervisor advice.
When the office was set up.

When did you contact the Faculty Ombuds Office? (Asked of the 35 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	%
During 2014/2015	22	62.9%
Prior to 2014	13	37.1%

How did you find out about the Faculty Ombuds Office? (Asked of the 88 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office or that they are familiar with the Faculty Ombuds Office.)		
	#	% of 88 respondents
Faculty colleague	25	28.4%
Faculty Senate	22	25.0%
New Faculty Orientation	27	30.7%
Ombuds brochure	11	12.5%
Ombuds website	9	10.2%
University or College meetings	37	42.0%
University news release	7	8.0%
Other	11	12.5%

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

Faculty Ombuds
Spring 2015
N=114

I've contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office and... (Asked of the 35 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.	30	88.2%	3	8.8%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1
I was able to meet with the ombuds for a reasonable amount of time.	31	88.6%	3	8.6%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds gave me the opportunity to express my concerns.	30	85.7%	5	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds appeared to understand the situation.	26	74.3%	6	17.1%	3	8.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds helped me identify and evaluate my options.	22	64.7%	7	20.6%	3	8.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%	1
The ombuds provided me with valuable information to help me make my decisions.	20	57.1%	8	22.9%	3	8.6%	2	5.7%	2	5.7%	0
Through my interactions with the Ombuds, I developed skills or learned approaches that might help me resolve future problems.	17	48.6%	6	17.1%	5	14.3%	5	14.3%	2	5.7%	0
The ombuds was courteous and respectful.	30	85.7%	5	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
The ombuds was neutral, unbiased and fair.	26	74.3%	5	14.3%	3	8.6%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%	0
I found the Ombuds conversant and knowledgeable about relevant institutional policies and procedures.	26	74.3%	6	17.1%	2	5.7%	0	0.0%	1	2.9%	0
I trust the ombuds to maintain my confidentiality.	30	85.7%	3	8.6%	1	2.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%	0

Faculty Ombuds

Spring 2015

N=114

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: *(Asked of the 88 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	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
I would refer to the Faculty Ombuds Office.	45	51.1%	27	30.7%	12	13.6%	3	3.4%	1	1.1%

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: *(Asked of the 53 respondents who answered that they've not contacted but 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.	22	41.5%	20	37.7%	9	17.0%	1	1.9%	1	1.9%

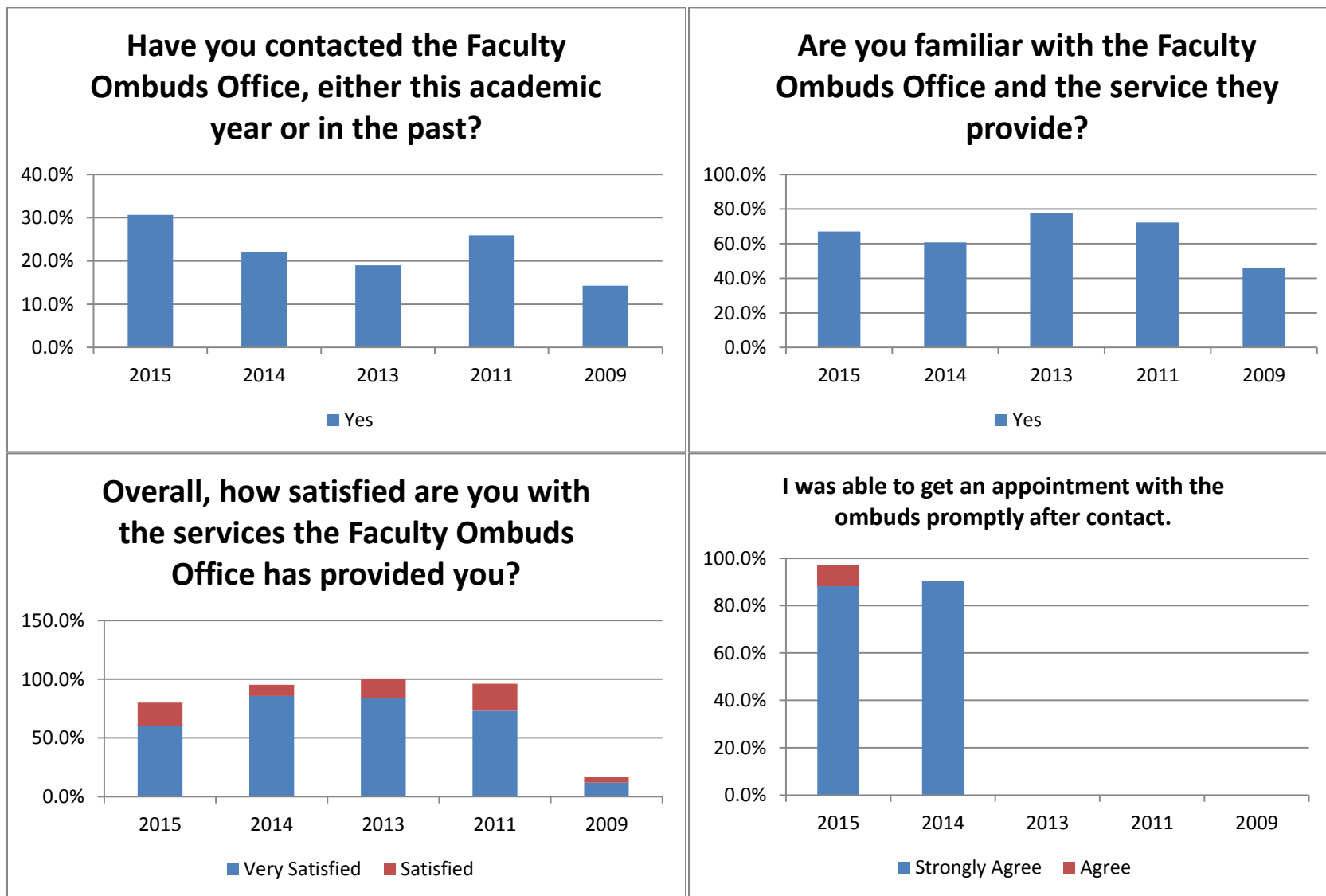
If you had not used the Ombuds Office, what would you have done regarding the issue? *(Asked of the 35 respondents who answered that they have contacted the Faculty Ombuds Office.)*

	#	%
I would not have talked to anyone about the issue.	10	32.3%
I would not have brought the issue up as quickly.	1	3.2%
I would have brought the issue up through a formal channel.	10	32.3%
I would have left the University.	4	12.9%
Other	6	19.4%

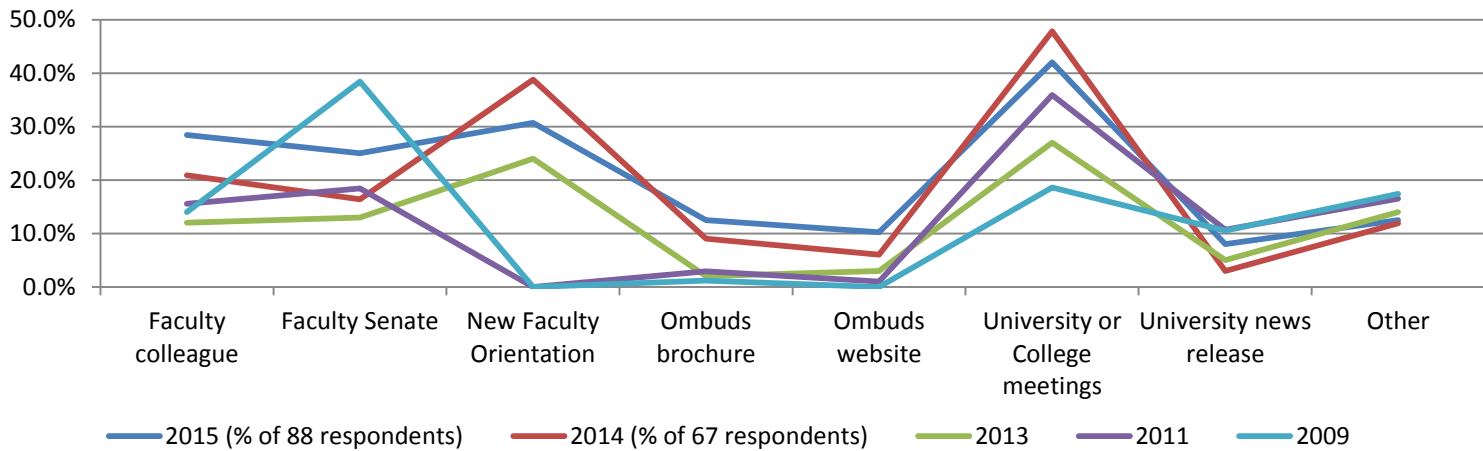
What *other* action would you have taken?

I don't know.
i would have brought up the issue informally with a colleague.
I would have sought advice from informal mentors.
It was a very serious department-wide issue, one that is still not really resolved. The choices here don't really reflect what alternative steps we might have taken.
Talked to senior trusted faculty

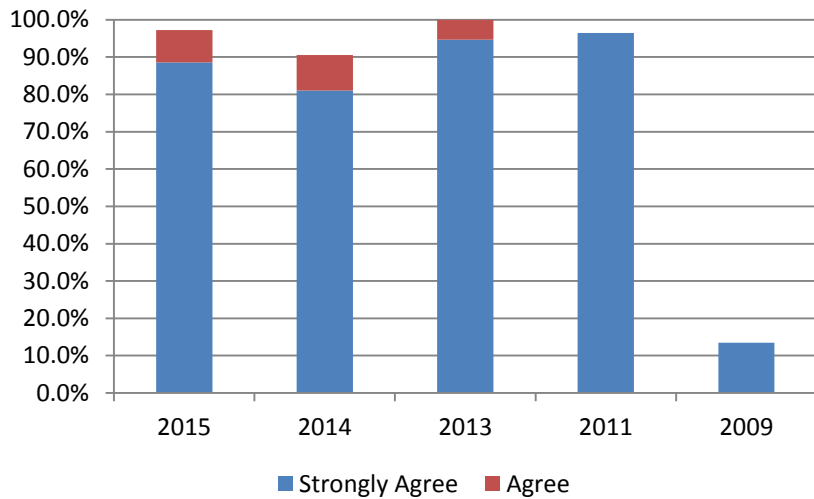
Appendix B to Faculty Ombuds Report, 2015: Comparative Analyses of Faculty Ombuds Annual Surveys



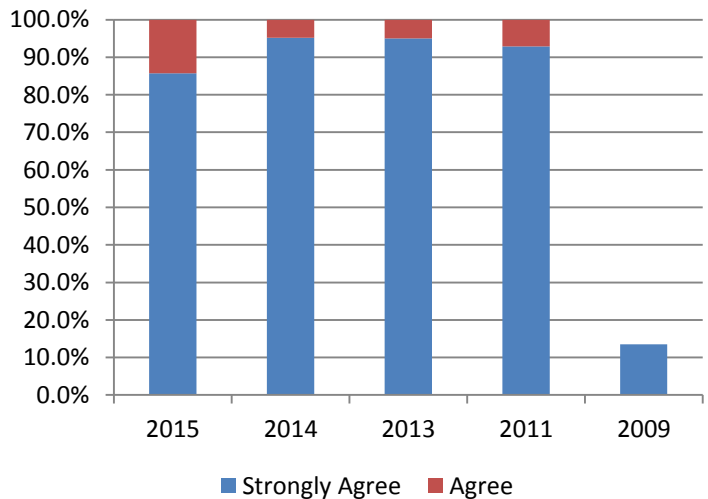
How did you find out about the Faculty Ombuds Office?



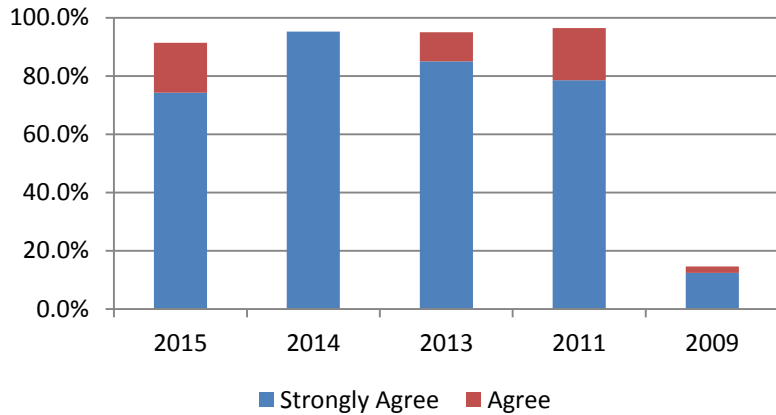
I was able to meet with the ombuds for a reasonable amount of time.



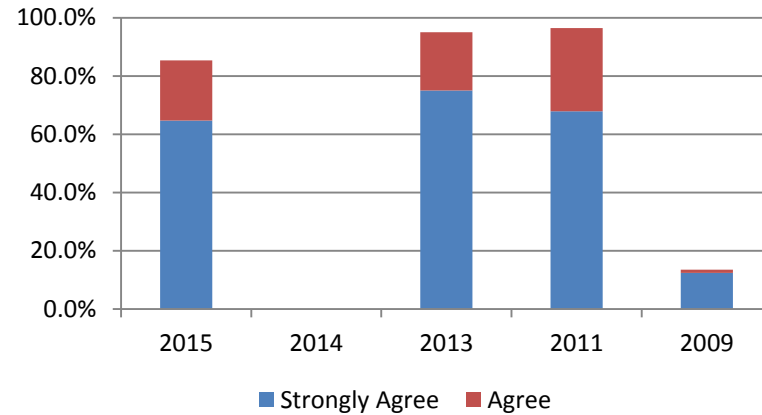
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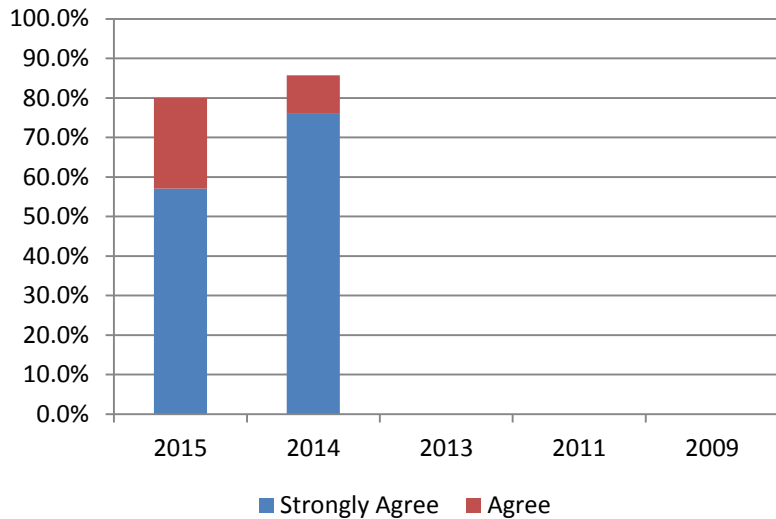
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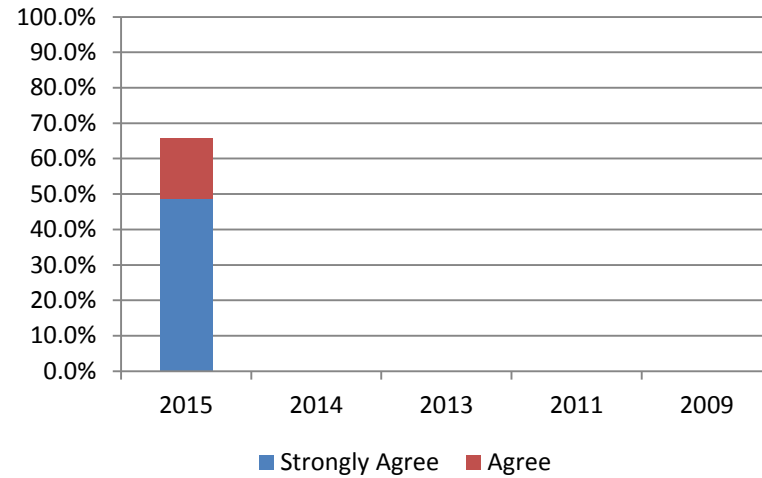
The ombuds helped me identify and evaluate my options.



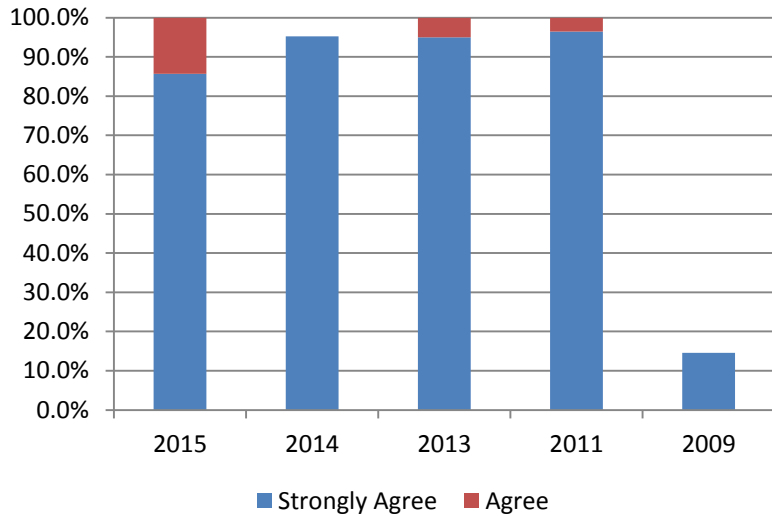
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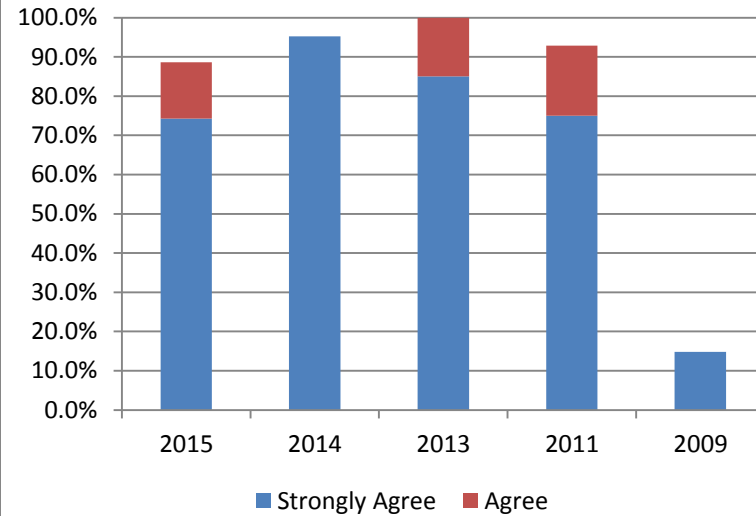
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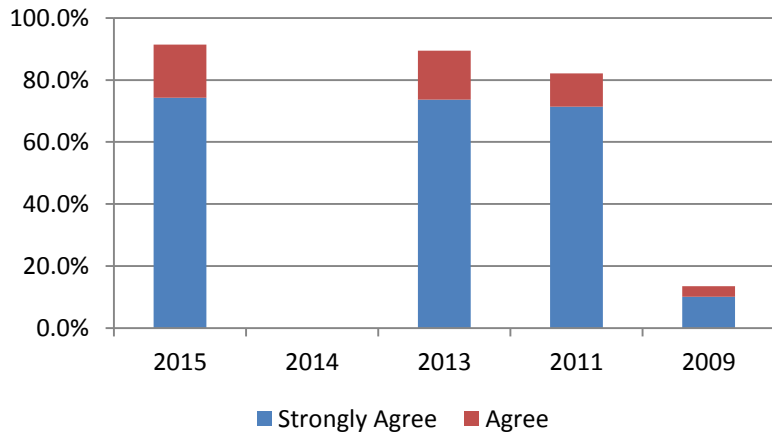
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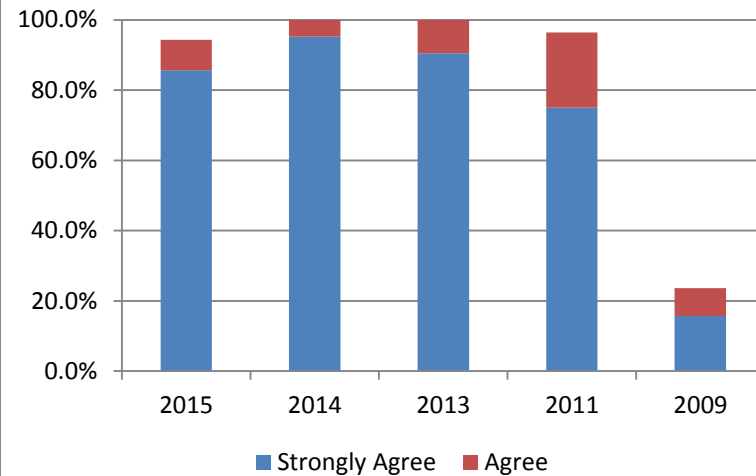
The ombuds was neutral, unbiased and fair.



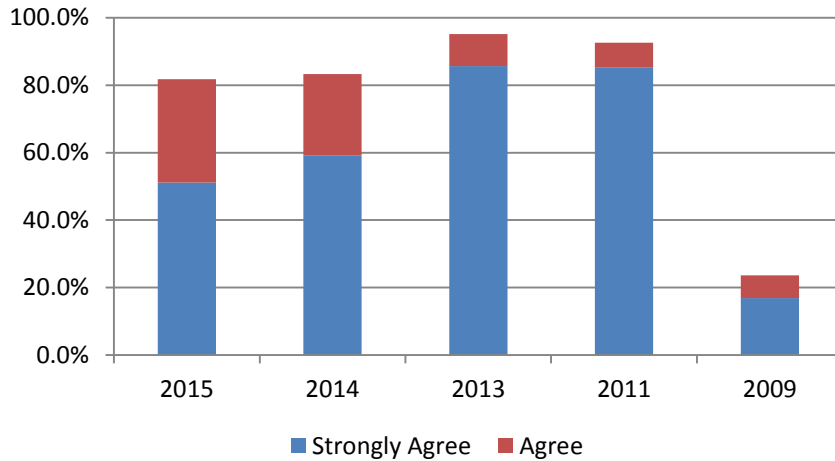
I found the Ombuds conversant and knowledgeable about relevant institutional policies and procedures.



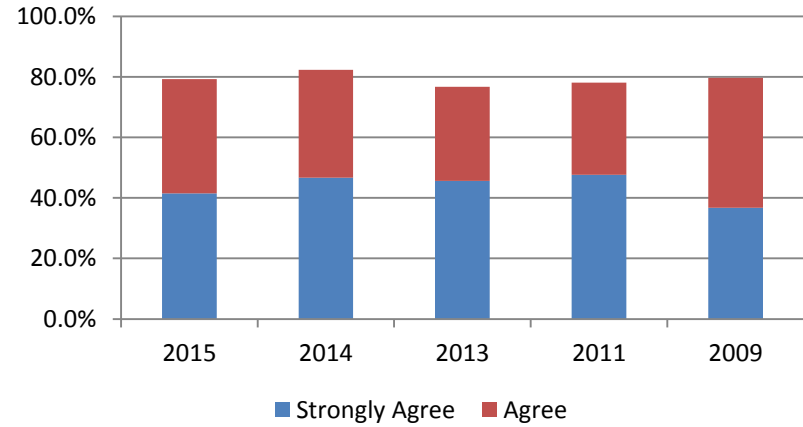
I trust the ombuds to maintain my confidentiality.



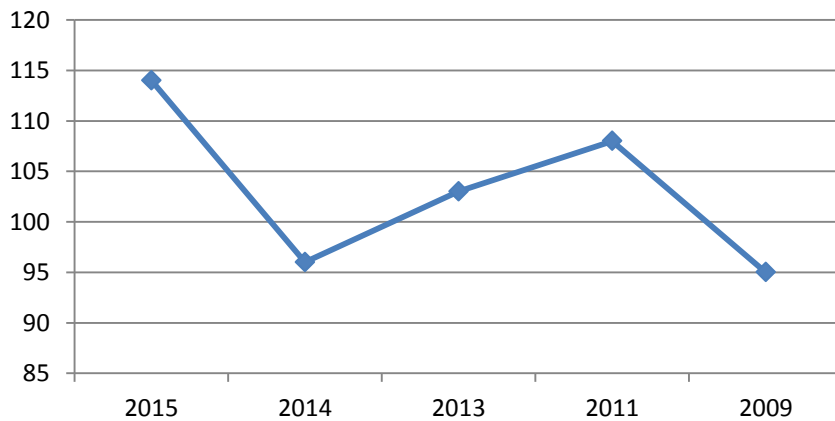
I would refer others to the Faculty Ombuds Office.



Although I have not used the Faculty Ombuds Office, if I needed their services, I would access them.



Faculty Ombuds Survey Number of Respondents



**All Appendices' Graphs courtesy of the
CCU Office of Institutional Research,
Assessment and Analysis
(Thanks to Stephanie Brownell, Molly French
and Holly Legg)**