



Report on the Faculty Ombuds Office

July 2022 through June 2023

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B. Bunton, D. Fribance, W. Dooley; and to Michael Benson, University President.*

June 30, 2023

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This is the fourteenth report from the Faculty Ombuds Office. This is my third report as the Faculty Ombuds; and it is intended to serve as a continuation (yearly activity report) and evaluation of trends and issues affecting faculty and my recommendations for consideration towards positive change for the faculty, campus community, and the Ombuds office. This report and earlier reports can be accessed at <http://www.coastal.edu/ombuds/reports>.

❖ History

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 University Faculty. Since 2008 the office has offered services to all faculty members. Charmaine Tomczyk was the first person elected to serve as Faculty Ombuds.

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 “the individual serving as Faculty Ombuds would serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms.”

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, Steve Madden, professor of communication, was appointed Faculty Ombuds beginning July 2015. Professor Madden retired from the University in July 2020.

The position of Faculty Ombuds was vacant from July 2020 through December 2020.

After a search conducted by the Faculty Welfare committee during the fall of 2020 and by a recommendation of the Faculty Senate, Renée Smith, professor of philosophy, was appointed by the Provost as Faculty Ombuds beginning January 2021.

Previously, the faculty ombuds position administratively reported to the Provost and the Faculty Senate; however, as it now reports to the University President and the Faculty Senate in keeping with International Ombuds Association (IOA) recommendations. The charter has been amended to reflect this change.

The Staff Ombuds position had been vacant since July 2020. Spring 2022, the position was filled by John Dooley.

Ombuds Services at CCU strive to adhere to the International Ombuds Association’s (IOA) [Standards of Practice](#) and [Code of Ethics](https://www.ombudsassociation.org) (<https://www.ombudsassociation.org>). These include the principles of confidentiality, independence, impartiality, and informality. The Faculty Ombuds Office is not a “place of notice” for official university reporting, as stated in its [Charter Agreement](#).

The Office of Ombuds Services fulfills one of the responsibilities in its charter by publishing this annual report to provide **upward feedback** to CCU as an early warning system of potential challenges and risks. In this report, I describe the role and ethical standards of the Office of the Ombuds, the services provided, the activities of the Faculty Ombuds, and the plans for the Faculty Ombuds. I report statistical data on the number and types of cases seen, offer comparative data for the last five (5) academic years¹, and describe potential costs of associated risks. I also fulfill one

¹ No data is available for 2019-2020, and the Faculty Ombuds position was vacant Fall 2020.

of the most specific responsibilities of the Office of the Ombuds: to report systemic organizational trends and make suggestions for promoting positive change at the University.

❖ Ombuds Services

➤ Services of the Ombuds

The Faculty Ombuds is a resource for faculty to address questions, concerns, and conflicts. The Ombuds offers a private and safe place to voice concerns, be listened to, get information, think through difficult situations, identify options, and solve problems. The Ombuds can confidentially gather information on your behalf, provide shuttle diplomacy, and facilitate or mediate communication between parties upon request. **The ombuds does not act as an advocate for any individual, provide legal advice, conduct formal investigations, participate in formal proceedings, or adjudicate, arbitrate, or assign sanctions.**

➤ Ombuds Principles

As an organizational ombuds, the Faculty Ombuds follows four guiding ethical principles established by the International Ombuds Association: Confidentiality, Impartiality, Independence, and Informality.

- **Your contact with the Faculty Ombuds is confidential.** All individual identities, communications, topics, questions, or areas of concern are kept in confidence unless you request that your concern be discussed with another party or in the case of imminent risk or serious harm to any individual or to the University. *Please note that email and voicemail should not be considered confidential communication; thus, no personal or private information should be included in email or voicemail correspondence.*
- **The Faculty Ombuds is impartial.** The Ombuds is not an advocate for any individual or office. Instead, as a designated neutral party, the Ombuds advocates for a fair process. The Ombuds does not act as a decision-making authority, does not make or enforce policy, and does not judge, discipline, or reward any person. When you speak to the Ombuds, you should expect a neutral, objective point of view.
- **The Faculty Ombuds is independent.** While the Faculty Ombuds reports trends and general information about ombuds contacts and activities to the Senate Executive Committee and the University President, and for administrative and budgetary reasons reports to the University President, the Ombuds is not part of the administrative structure of the University.
- **The Faculty Ombuds is informal.** Contact with the Ombuds is not part of any formal procedure or policy. All communication with the Ombuds is “off the record.” When you speak to the Ombuds, you are not putting the University on notice, and the Faculty Ombuds is not a mandatory reporter for Title IX. Instead, the Ombuds can help answer questions and provide information, assist in identifying and reframing issues or concerns, and help you develop a range of options for a desirable outcome.

➤ Upward Feedback

In addition to providing information, coaching, and conflict resolution services, the Office of the Ombuds serves CCU by providing **upward feedback** on themes arising from cases brought to us. In this way, we can alert leadership to potential challenges facing the institution without compromising individuals’ confidentiality, and by reporting on

themes in the aggregate. By identifying systemic trends in complaints and concerns, the Ombuds provides an "early warning" system to leadership in support of institutional efforts to humanize the work and learning environment at CCU. Upward feedback is delivered at the institutional level and unit level, helping to address a pattern where it can best be addressed. The provision of upward feedback ensures that we not only serve the individuals and groups who make up the institution, but that we serve CCU as a whole.

➤ The Uniqueness of Ombuds Services

Unlike [Human Resources](#), the Office of the Ombuds provides **off-the-record services** and is not an "office of notice" for the University. This means that the Ombuds is not required to report specific information to the administration. Additionally, our **neutrality** allows us to explore all options with visitors. While we recognize the value of formal routes for conflict resolution complaints, such as [HR](#), [Compliance](#), and Faculty Grievance, our services provide the CCU community with an *informal* alternative that may be explored before (or even after) a formal option is exercised, potentially allowing parties to come to a satisfactory resolution among themselves. Through these means, we promote CCU-wide conflict competence, one person, dyad, or team at a time.

Traditionally, our Employee Assistance Program ([Life Services EAP](#)) provides confidential counseling services for a variety of personal issues such as stress, physical or mental health concerns, and legal questions that may be affecting job performance. The CCU Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (Life Services EAP) is staffed by clinical psychologists, and the Ombuds refers visitors to EAP to receive counseling services.

In contrast, Ombuds offices traditionally address individual, team, or departmental concerns from a conflict management approach that is based on mediation principles of **impartiality, confidentiality, balance and self-determination**, and **voluntary participation**, consistent with the Ombuds Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. With respect to employees, Life Services EAP serves faculty and staff, the Student Health Service serves our students, while the Faculty Ombuds serves all faculty at CCU, and the Staff Ombuds serves staff members.

❖ Ombuds Activities

➤ Where: Contacting the Ombuds in 2022-2023

I can be reached using either the Faculty Ombuds email (facultyombuds@coastal.edu) or my email (rsmith@coastal.edu), or by leaving a message on the Faculty Ombuds voicemail (843-349-2727) or on my voicemail (843-349-2083). *Please remember that email and voicemail should not be considered confidential and should only be used to request an appointment.*

From July 2022 to June 2023, **68 visitors**² contacted me for Ombuds Services. Visitors' initial contacts were made by email (45), phone (16), Facebook (4), walk-in/stop by (2), text message (1), and Teams message (0). Subsequent meetings were held on Zoom/Teams (34), in-person³ (18), phone (8), email (8), Facebook messaging (0), text (0).

² This year I did not record every follow-up or email/phone inquiry but only initial meetings.

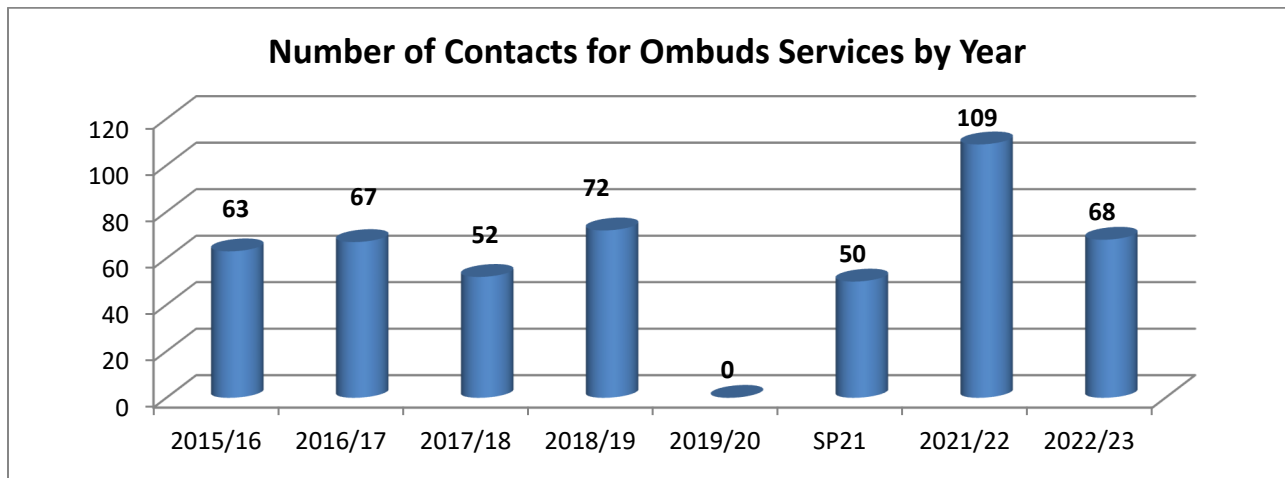
³ Please note that after the Staff Ombuds was hired, KL1B 210 because a shared office. Since the staff ombuds used the office Tuesday-Thursday, I could only offer it as a meeting place on Mondays and Fridays.

➤ **When: Wait Time to Meet with the Faculty Ombuds**

I was able to respond to most requests for a meeting within 2 hours, and I was usually able to schedule meetings within 2 days of initial contact. Often, I was able to meet with visitors within 24 hours of initial contact.

➤ **Who: Visitors to Ombuds Services**

July 1, 2023, through June 15, 2023, **68** contacts were made for Faculty Ombuds Services. The bar graph below illustrates the number of contacts each of the last several years. (No records are available from the former Faculty Ombuds for 2019-20, and the position was vacant Fall 2020.)



The breakdown by college for 2022-23:

- Humanities & Fine Arts (44)
- Science (7)
- Business (5)
- Education & Social Science (3)
- Library (3)
- Human Health and Performance (2)
- Honors (1)
- Other (3)

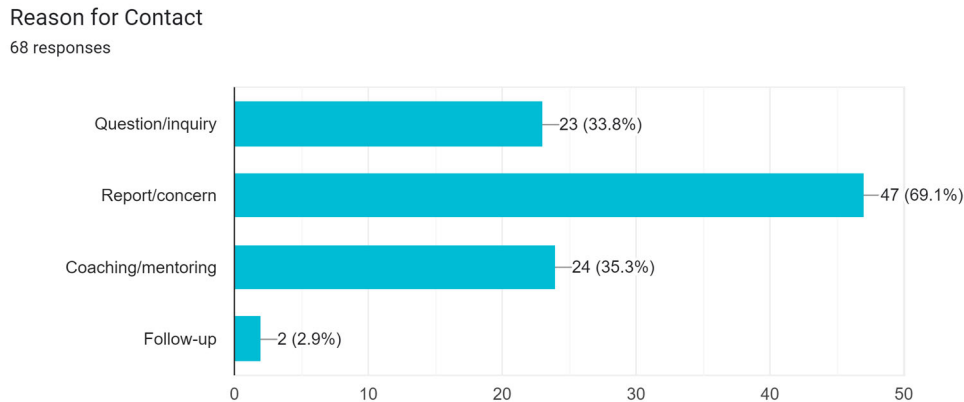
The breakdown by visitor's position:

- Administration (1)
- Tenured Faculty (31)
- Tenure-Track Faculty (17)
- Non-Tenure Track Faculty (5)
- Associated Faculty (9)
- Staff (3)
- Other (2)

➤ Why: Topics of Concern

Reason for Contact

This year, I tracked general categories of the nature of Faculty Ombuds contacts. Most contacts were to report a concern (47), seek coaching, mentoring, or advice (24), or to ask a question about policies or procedures (23). Visitors also reached out to follow up on previous meetings (2) or for other reasons (6).



Uniform Reporting Categories

In keeping with the IOA Principles and Standards, no individual's name, detailed records or notes, 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.

Concerns raised by visitors to Ombuds Service are classified using the [IOA Uniform Reporting Categories](#). This lists 9 main categories, each having 5-19 sub-categories. I added an additional 10th category for teaching and student-related concerns and will be reviewing and revising these categories to meet the needs of the CCU community.

Visitors may identify multiple concerns that fit into different categories. While listening to visitors, I tried to identify their two primary concerns using the URC. The most frequently presented *categories* of issues for 2022-23 were Evaluative Relationships (18), Career Progression & Development (17), Peer and Colleague Relationships (15), Compensation & Benefits (9), and Services/Administrative Issues (8).

1. Compensation & Benefits - (Presented 9 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: Benefits (especially FMLA and modified duties not offered or explained); EAP; when to contact HR and payroll; credit for work performed; teaching load calculation; accommodations for disabilities, etc. In most of these cases, visitors were referred to HR or information from HR was sought anonymously on the visitor's behalf.

2. Evaluative Relationships - (Presented 18 times)

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

Most frequent subcategories: Integrity, respect, and fair treatment; priorities, values, beliefs; communication; bullying and retaliation; work assignments and scheduling; supervisory effectiveness; department climate.

Types of specific concerns: Fairness and/or perceived retaliation in teaching loads and teaching assignments; applications and decisions pertaining to scholarly reassignment; communication related to requirements for promotion and tenure; chairs' involvement in department peer review; process for deciding new department chair; support for career progression and mentoring; unprofessional communication; shared governance concerns; treatment after FMLA and modified duty requests; excessive meetings and superfluous work assignments/meetings distracting from regular job duties; subjective interpretations of performance expectations; interference in search procedures; deans' communication with faculty; lack of training or support for department chairs.

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships - (Presented 15 times)

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 subcategories: Respect and treatment; priorities, beliefs, values; reputation; bullying and mobbing.

Types of specific concerns: Concerns about P&T procedure; confidentiality in peer review; reputation compromised/challenged; gossip; disparate service expectations/contributions; bullying; lack of mentoring or support in progress towards P&T; desire for shared governance in departments; treatment of associated faculty; unfair distribution of work.

4. Career Progression and Development (Presented 17 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 subcategories: Career progression; career development, coaching, mentoring; termination and non-re-appointment; tenure and promotion.

Types of specific concerns: Questions about job reclassification and non-reappointment; performance expectations for promotion and tenure; lack of clarity in evaluative rubrics; inconsistent standards for performance ratings; gatekeeping; tenure and promotion processes; requesting coaching pertaining to promotion and tenure; lack of transparency in decision making; issues with applying/receiving scholarly reassignment.

5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance (Presented 2 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: Questions about HR policies, e.g., ADA, benefits upon non-reappointment; referrals to HR.

6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment (Presented 1 times)

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

Most frequent concerns: Concerns about physical safety from outside threats.

7. Services/Administrative Issues (Presented 8 times)

Defined as: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties. (Primarily academic administration and other professional offices at or above the level of dean)

Most frequent concerns: Perceptions of preferential treatment; administrative decisions, e.g., pertaining to scholarly reassignment, administrative searches, etc.; desire for shared governance and transparency in decision-making; grades altered or overturned; chairs' workload; non-responsiveness or lack of support from administrative offices, e.g., ITS and support staff outside their modified hours.

8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related (Presented 1 time)

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: Wanting transparency in decision-making and administrative appointments and searches; changes to scholarly reassignment requirements; lack of shared governance; changes to class size and teaching load.

9. Values, Ethics, and Standards (Presented 1 time)

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: Concerns about administrative searches and appointments; lack of accountability; unfair application of policies; perceived interference in faculty processes (e.g., searches, department peer review, and P&T) by academic administrators.

10. Student & Teaching Related (Presented 3 times)

Defined as: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about treatment as a student or teaching, communication with students or teachers, respect as student or teacher, and other issues.

Most frequent concerns: Administrative grade changes; quality of student services; FERPA.

➤ How: Types of Ombuds Services Offered

The types of assistance provided by the Faculty Ombuds (in order of prevalence) continued to be:

- **Listening and understanding:** Providing a safe and confidential resource for articulating and clarifying one’s concerns and issues.
- **Individual consultations:** Offering strategies and options to help a visitor resolve 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.
- **Coaching and mentoring:** Listening and providing feedback on professional goals and individual strategies for career progression.
- **Gathering information:** Making inquiries anonymously on behalf of the visitor.

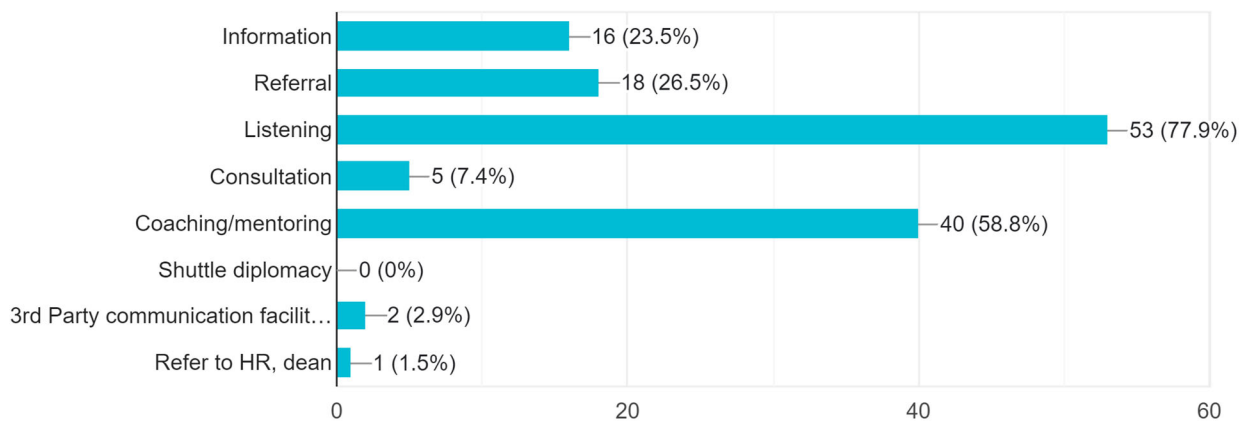
Other types of assistance the Ombuds provides but that was not requested this year include:

- **Shuttle diplomacy:** Serving as an intermediary between parties to facilitate indirect communication.
- **Facilitating communication as a third-party:** Serving as an objective facilitator of direct communication.

For 2022-23, services included listening to concerns (53), coaching/mentoring (40), providing a referral (19), providing information (16), consulting (5), and other (2).

Services Provided

68 responses



➤ What: Observations

Like last year, many of the people I spoke to were interested in discussing more personal issues such as professional development (promotion, peer review, performance expectations, mentoring, etc.), interpersonal communication (confidentiality, bullying, feedback, gossip, etc.), and personal accountability, responsibility, and well-being (one's own behavior and decisions, benefits and support, workload, stress, etc.).

While visitors still sought me out for information about policies and procedures and for referrals to support offices on campus and reported concerns about shared governance and transparency in decision making (e.g., scholarly reassignment decisions and administrative searches), often visitors were seeking support, empathy, and coaching and used their interactions with me as an opportunity to reflect, take ownership of their own professional behaviors, develop strategies for managing their own professional lives, their well-being, and their experiences of stress.

Considering all visitors, the top issues reported by visitors for 2022-23 are:

- Communication with and expectations of department chairs and supervisors.
- Career development and performance expectations.
- Support and training for faculty and chairs with respect to supervisory roles and advising duties.
- Shared governance, especially at the department level
- Trust/integrity/respect/fair treatment, especially with colleagues, chairs/supervisors, and deans

Based on visitor data and observations, the Faculty Ombuds reports the following organizational, systemic areas of concern:

- Administrative leadership and professional development in the colleges, especially mentoring and support through the promotion and review process.
- Shared governance in departments and in colleges, especially with respect to performance expectations and peer evaluation
- Knowledge about policies and procedures, especially HR and academic policies related to FMLA, FSMD, protocol for interacting with job candidates, including internal job candidates, bullying and retaliation.
- Knowledge of the [Code of Ethical Conduct](#) and the Code of Faculty Conduct and Academic Responsibility ([Faculty Manual](#), section 5.1.4), especially the obligations of (1) confidentiality with respect to personnel decisions, including non-reappointment, promotion, tenure, and post-tenure review, and (2) cultivating an atmosphere of fairness and respect.

➤ Risks Avoided

It is difficult to measure the exact outcomes of Ombuds Services; however, the Ombuds survey reflects that visitor were satisfied with their outcomes and they have confidence in the services provided by the Ombuds office. By contacting the Ombuds informally, formal grievances and procedures can be avoided. Successful outcomes have the potential for significant savings to the institution by avoiding the cost of absenteeism, grievances, litigation, staff/faculty turnover, and diminished productivity for individuals and their employment area.

❖ Other Activities

➤ Faculty Development / Informational Events

In addition to reminding faculty of Ombuds Services on the [Ombuds Facebook page](#) and announcing Ombuds Services in email and at Faculty Senate, I gave the following virtual presentations for faculty this year:

- Virtual Presentation, “Introduction to the Faculty Ombuds,” New Faculty Session, July 29, 2022
- Virtual Panel, “Policy, Politics, and People,” Faculty Seminar Series, CeTEAL, November 4, 2022
- Virtual Presentation, “Introduction to the Faculty Ombuds,” New Faculty Seminar, March 17, 2023

As in previous years, these events were not well attended. Please note that I would be happy to meet with departments or other groups to introduce the services provided by the ombuds office upon request

➤ Committee Service

The Faculty Ombuds serves *ex officio* on the Faculty Manual Review Committee and the Non-Tenure Track Faculty Committee. Being on these committees allows the Faculty Ombuds to stay abreast of policies and concerns relating to the faculty and to provide information to committee members, as necessary.

➤ Ombuds Survey

Satisfaction and Confidence

The annual spring Ombuds survey administered by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Analysis yielded 176 respondents compared to 147 in 2022 and 190 in 2021. The Spring 2023 Ombuds survey reports that 81.25% (n=32) of those people who contacted the Faculty Ombuds were either *very satisfied* (n=20) or *satisfied* (n=6) with the service they were provided.

Other Observations from the Survey

- Promote/increase awareness of Ombuds Services on campus (faculty and department meetings, new faculty orientations)
- Continue virtual and in-person meetings
- Host ombuds information events
- Promote a better understanding of what an ombuds does, specifically that the Ombuds is meant to be an advocate for a fair process and not an advocate for any individual person or office; the Ombuds cannot serve in any formal capacity or procedure; and the Ombuds cannot make policy. The Ombuds is a confidential resource for gathering information, discussing concerns, examining courses of action, and understanding policy. The Ombuds engages in upward reporting of trends in such a way as to not reveal any personal information or the identities of visitors.
- Continue to build trust and confidence in ombuds services.

The complete results of the 2023 Ombuds Survey are provided in Appendix A of this report.

➤ Ombuds Reporting and Training

Since February 2021, the Faculty Ombuds reports to the Senate Executive Committee and the University President. The Faculty Ombuds meets periodically with the President and the Senate Chair and reports trends, observations,

and recommendations to improve the working environment at CCU. No identifying information or specific details of Ombuds contact are revealed to anyone at the University.

❖ Recommendations

➤ General Recommendations

The Office of the Ombuds recommends the following to address the challenges in our university environment:

- Reiterate standards of professional conduct, the Code of Ethical Conduct, and the Code of Faculty Conduct and Academic Responsibility reminding all members of the community of our obligations concerning confidentiality, respect, and fair treatment.
- Create a climate of support and respect for professional development, mentoring, and recognition of the diversity of research, teaching, and service contributions by faculty members.
- Provide on-going training and support for departments chairs and deans to maintain currency with respect to policies and procedures.
- Cultivate a better understanding of and trust in the services of Human Resources in delivering information about employee benefits and resolving personnel problems.
- Practice consensus building, transparency in decision-making, and responsiveness to faculty concerns and inquiries.
- Use consistent terms of evaluation to avoid perceptions of unfairness.
- Improve understanding of and support for shared governance and academic freedom in the colleges.
- Clarify or establish policies pertaining to reporting or notifying faculty, including administration, of policy non-compliance or breaches of codes of conduct (e.g., information-gathering and verbal warnings should precede letters of reprimand or suspensions, hold all members of the university community to these codes of conduct) without fear of retaliation.
- Provide mentoring/support for new faculty.

Setting new norms requires the development of new skills. Senior administrators, department chairs, and faculty members should lead in establishing norms of transparency, consensus building, workplace civility, confidentiality, productive interpersonal communication, policy competence, and fair treatment.

➤ Other Recommendations to Consider

1. All faculty and administrators should periodically review the [Code of Ethical Conduct](#); the [Faculty Manual](#), including the Code of Faculty Conduct and Academic Responsibility (5.1.4.2), the Statement of Shared Governance (4.2.1), the Functions of the Faculty (4.3), the statement of Academic Freedom (5.2.1), and the University Financial Crisis and Exigent Circumstances Policy (5.2.10); the College Handbooks and Bylaws; and [University Policies](#), including [FAST-238 Workplace and Domestic Violence; Workplace Bullying](#), [UNIV-468 Title IX Policy](#), [UNIV-414 Whistleblower and Retaliation Protections](#), [FAST-243 Family Medical Leave Act](#), and [UNIV-469 Pregnant or Parenting Individuals](#); and the Provost's [Family Support and Modified Duties](#) policy.
2. The campus community should have open discussions about the policies mentioned above, look at case studies, develop courses of action for dealing with breaches of codes of conduct, and think about how to avoid or prevent conduct violations.

3. College and departmental handbooks, bylaws, policies (*especially* concerning promotion, tenure, and review), and procedures should be easily accessible on each college’s faculty resources webpage or posted centrally for easy access by all faculty.
4. Ensure that there are fair and equitable performance expectations across colleges and departments, including scholarly reassignment, promotion criteria, standards for post-tenure review, FMLA, and family leave and modified duties policy.
5. Clarify the faculty grievance process—both via the administrative chain of command and the faculty grievance committee—as well as grievance reporting and tracking at the department and college level.

While we all recognize the extraordinary work being done at CCU, a commitment to name and address the challenges we face can facilitate alignment with ethical principles that we espouse and support our mission of excellence.

❖ Plans for Developing Ombuds Services at CCU

- Provide information and promote the services provided by the organizational Faculty Ombuds.
- Host discussion groups and virtual meetings pertaining to the codes of conduct, policies, and procedures.
- Create a feedback survey for visitors.
- Revise the categories of reporting to better reflect the needs of the community.
- Continue professional development through the International Ombuds Association.
- Establish lines of communication with university leadership.
- Collaborate with the Staff Ombuds.

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 2022-23 Ombuds Faculty Survey confirms the satisfaction of visitors to the office and its programs and yet I am acutely aware of the critical feedback I received, and I will make every effort to improve perceptions of fairness, impartiality, and trustworthiness. Faculty contacting the Ombuds Office primarily expressed concerns over evaluative relationships, colleague interactions, policies and procedures, and professional development. Monitoring related campus climate issues from employees’ viewpoints should be measured regularly through reliable surveys and other methods.

Serving as Faculty Ombuds, I am appreciative of the support from the Faculty Senate executive committee and the President in making ombuds services available to all faculty and for the collegiality of the Staff Ombuds, John Dooley. I look forward to opportunities to work with both the faculty and the administration to promote and contribute to a well-functioning university. It is my sincere hope that the office’s services will be sustained, utilized, and expanded based on the needs of the faculty, staff, and students. 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 its members.

Respectfully submitted by Renée Smith, June 30, 2023

❖ Appendix A: Spring 2023 Ombuds Survey Results

Faculty Ombuds Survey

Spring 2023



Faculty Ombuds Survey Spring 2023

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

This survey was administered online to all faculty members employed in the Spring 2023 semester, excepting the President, Provost, Associate Provosts, and Deans. Staff members who also teach were classified as staff rather than faculty and invited to take the Staff Ombuds (rather than the Faculty Ombuds) annual survey. Restricted invitation links (only those receiving a link can access the survey, and only one time per link) were sent to internal email addresses on April 25, 2023. Over a 15-day span, two follow-up reminders were sent to those who had not yet responded.

Response Rate:	
# Invited	695
# Responded	167
% Response Rate	21.9%

Faculty Type	
Faculty	131 78.4%
Associated Faculty	36 21.6%

Tenure Status	
Tenured	77 46.1%
Tenure-Track	35 21.0%
Non Tenure-Track	55 32.9%

College	
Business	19 11.4%
Education & Social Sciences	24 14.4%
Health & Human Performance	18 10.8%
Humanities & Fine Arts	60 35.9%
Science	35 21.0%
Honors	3 1.8%
Other	8 4.8%

Faculty Ombuds Survey Spring 2023

Are you familiar with the Faculty Ombuds and the services they provide?	
Yes	145 86.8%
No	22 13.2%

[If familiar] How did you learn about the Faculty Ombuds at CCU?	
Colleague	72 49.7%
Email	64 44.1%
Information session	52 35.9%
Website	16 11.0%
Other	10 6.9%
Faculty Senate	7 4.8%
Faculty Orientation	6 4.1%
From the Faculty Ombuds	4 2.8%

In what other way did you learn about the Ombuds?
It is common knowledge that this service is available.
social media
the office formerly known as CeTEAL.
University leadership announced it during several meetings
was on committee that originally created the position
just been around a long time, and know the history of starting it
during a beginning-of-semester all-university faculty meeting years ago
Many; I think I was here when it started.

Faculty Ombuds Survey Spring 2023

[If familiar] The Faculty Ombuds...	Mean	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Can be trusted to maintain confidentiality.	4.08	65 45.8%	43 30.3%	21 14.8%	6 4.2%	7 4.9%
Is a resource to which I would encourage colleagues to access.	4.03	65 45.8%	37 26.1%	25 17.6%	9 6.3%	6 4.2%
Is a resource I would access myself if needed in the future.	4.01	65 45.8%	39 27.5%	21 14.8%	8 5.6%	9 6.3%

Did you contact the Faculty Ombuds in the 2022-2023 academic year?	
Yes	32 22.5%
No	110 77.5%

[If contacted] How did you meet with the Faculty Ombuds?	
In person	18 56.3%
Virtual	12 37.5%
Phone call	8 25.0%
Other	5 15.6%
Email	3 9.4%

In what other way did you meet with the Ombuds?	
We didn't meet.	
I will not identify the medium	

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[If contacted]	
Overall, how satisfied are you with the service the Faculty Ombuds provided you?	
Very Satisfied (5)	20 62.5%
Satisfied (4)	6 18.8%
Neutral (3)	3 9.4%
Dissatisfied (2)	2 6.3%
Very Dissatisfied (1)	1 3.1%
Mean	4.31

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[If contacted] Thinking about your interaction in the 2022-2023 academic year, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about the Faculty Ombuds:						
	Mean	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Gave me the opportunity to express my concerns.	4.68	23 74.2%	7 22.6%	- -	1 3.2%	- -
Was knowledgeable about relevant institutional policies and procedures.	4.53	23 71.9%	5 15.6%	3 9.4%	- -	1 3.1%
Provided me with valuable information to help me make my decisions.	4.45	20 64.5%	8 25.8%	1 3.2%	1 3.2%	1 3.2%
Understood the situation.	4.35	21 67.7%	5 16.1%	2 6.5%	1 3.2%	2 6.5%
Helped me identify my options.	4.41	20 62.5%	8 25.0%	2 6.3%	1 3.1%	1 3.1%
Helped me evaluate my options.	4.19	17 54.8%	6 19.4%	6 19.4%	1 3.2%	1 3.2%
Was courteous and respectful.	4.56	23 71.9%	6 18.8%	2 6.3%	- -	1 3.1%
Was neutral.	4.13	19 59.4%	6 18.8%	2 6.3%	2 6.3%	3 9.4%
Was unbiased.	4.22	21 65.6%	4 12.5%	3 9.4%	1 3.1%	3 9.4%
Was fair.	4.38	23 71.9%	3 9.4%	3 9.4%	1 3.1%	2 6.3%
Helped me develop skills that might help resolve future issues.	4.06	16 51.6%	6 19.4%	6 19.4%	1 3.2%	2 6.5%
Helped me learn approaches that might help resolve future issues.	4.10	17 54.8%	6 19.4%	4 12.9%	2 6.5%	2 6.5%
Was available for an appointment promptly after contact.	4.74	25 80.6%	5 16.1%	- -	1 3.2%	- -
Was able to meet with me for a reasonable amount of time.	4.74	25 80.6%	5 16.1%	- -	1 3.2%	- -

[If contacted] If you had not contacted the Faculty Ombuds, what would you have done regarding this issue?	
I would have brought the issue up through a formal channel	10 31.3%
I would not have talked to anyone about the issue	7 21.9%
I would not have brought the issue up as quickly	7 21.9%
Other	6 18.8%
I would have left the University	2 6.3%

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What other action would you have taken?

I would have sought legal counsel.

I would have talked to colleagues maybe, but it helped more to talk to someone who was not part of the same department--she could see it more clearly from the outside

I am not sure

I would just say that the outcome would have been different, and less positive and fair overall.

Talk to more experienced colleagues.

Do you have suggestions for improvement in Faculty Ombuds and/or conflict resolution services on campus?

Renee is great!

Keep it going!

I doubt the impartiality of the ombuds at this time. There is a clear alignment with the dean of Humanities and a hostility toward the current provost.

Identify a new faculty ombuds

I forgot the office is here. More emails, perhaps once per semester might be nice.

just did not know bout it?

None

Follow-up.

I think many people don't understand what ombuds does. I tell people all the time to talk to ombuds when they have a problem, but it is unclear how ombuds can actually help seeing as the meeting is confidential. What are the actionable steps that ombuds can do to support faculty and staff and are these being communicated effectively?

I keep hearing stories that I cannot verify, of the ombuds taking an active position on the issue the faculty member approached with. The Ombuds should be a neutral party, even if the faculty member is looking for someone to "take sides", that is not what the ombuds should be doing. It's great that she's passionate, but she needs to provide resources not opinions or advice, and she needs to remain neutral.

Letting faculty know the existence and function

Provide more information, especially to new hires, regarding the purpose and scope of the Ombuds role and service(s).

No. I feel Renee is doing well in that position.

no

no

N/A

None

I think just keep encouraging people to use the service. It's very helpful!

Get someone less condescending for the position

No

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Do you have suggestions for improvement in Faculty Ombuds and/or conflict resolution services on campus?

The Ombuds needs to be replaced. She has involved herself in several ways in issues and actions in which it was inappropriate for her to have involvement. She also consistently misinterprets or is ignorant of university policies. Finally, she is temperamentally unfit for the position, as she has personal vendettas with people on this campus, does not hide these opinions, and engages in gossip regarding faculty and administrators at CCU. I do not trust her and will never bring any matter to her again.

Perhaps some more outreach aimed at new faculty? With so much going on, so much learning and adjustment happening, it might help remind them that the Ombuds service is available.

The Faculty Ombuds generally, and Dr. Renee Smith specifically, provide invaluable services. It is so helpful to be heard and to feel as though there is an unbiased advocate and adviser for faculty. My work is better because there is a great Ombuds.

No

n/a

Many colleagues aren't aware of how Faculty Ombuds can help them. Yes, they know they can support them, but they aren't aware if the help is or not confidential, or they don't know the measurements that will be applied to other faculty... I think more information on the process of how Faculty Ombuds works could be helpful. Also knowing specific examples of the type of help we can get could help too. But it's a great service and I appreciate having this at CCU.

At the beginning of each semester, send an email reminder on services available or a link to ombuds resources.

Get a new person

I do not have any suggestions, but I'm glad the Ombuds service is available!

The current ombuds is poorly suited for this role. She is not a neutral arbiter when it comes to resolving conflicts. She does not even bother to hide her personal biases and opinions, whether it is in support or opposition, to the parties involved in a conflict.

You are a phenomenal. You are knowledgeable on policies and procedures and are a tremendous help!

I'm not familiar with it enough to suggest improvements

None

Just continue to provide opportunities for new faculty to understand the role and services provided. Renee has been great in our interactions which have not been related to Faculty Ombuds.

I haven't used the service so I have no idea to suggest anything for the improvement. But I have heard positive things about the service.

Maybe just some office hours each week for drop ins (or at least more widely distribute those as I wasn't aware of any). Also, I'm not sure what you mean by conflict resolution services exactly, but I'm intrigued. This is something I could see coming in handy.

No true recommendation. Ensuring you advertise your unbiased services and availability to all. I was an Ombudsman for the National Intelligence Community, and everyone understanding they had an outlet for possible discussions and a more clear understanding of the issue (or potential issue).

Na

Thank you so much for providing this invaluable service!

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Do you have suggestions for improvement in Faculty Ombuds and/or conflict resolution services on campus?

I know that there is an annual survey from the Ombuds as it would be helpful to see the pattern of issues occurring on the campus. I also think it would be a good idea to have the Ombuds present to the faculty body at least once a year, ideally in the General Faculty meeting. I don't think faculty, particularly new faculty, understand the role of Ombuds.

Ombuds should remain neutral and unbiased in all campus activities; Off campus, Ombuds commentary on social media can threaten trust in ombuds to deliver unbiased services

Taking students to off campus classes. Lack of transportation limits students . A lot of students don't know what opportunities they have off campus

I would love to hear about it more.

Please provide information on what the Ombuds service is able to accomplish successfully in terms of advocating for/implementing improvements in institutional policy and practices that might be recommended on the basis of gathered data.

As far as I can tell, it is an excellent service. I have no suggestions for improving.

Demonstrate respect for confidentiality of students as well as faculty, especially on social media.

None. Thank you so much for being so collegial. I understand the value of mentoring because of you.

Hold regular information sessions.

I specifically DID NOT reach out to this individual because I do not think them to be trustworthy, discrete, or level-headed. I have used the Ombuds services in years past and had a great experience. I am not sure how the Ombuds position is assigned, or if it is self-nominated, but this was not a good choice pretraining to this specific individual. Also, I am not sure who oversees the Ombuds - is it the board of trustees? I have not idea how to report my feelings throughout the year. I am glad however, for this opportunity to complete this survey.

I think (generally speaking) campus culture and low morale have convinced most faculty that the Ombuds means well, but can't do anything to resolve endemic issues/problems at this institution.

Excellent service!

NA

None

I don't have any direct suggestions, but absolutely appreciate the work this office provides and the presence of the Ombuds at a variety of meetings as a clear campus resource and presence.

Not at this time

Doing a great job.

No

I would suggest you to come to the first college faculty meetings and share the cases that you resolved. People seem to think that Ombuds doesn't solve any problems that faculty may have therefore they don't even try.

This is a difficult position, and this person can't be expected to always have a good answer. However, it's very important to have someone for faculty to go to when trying to work through difficult or sensitive issues. I hope that this position will continue to be supported and provided with resources.

I would never approach Rene for help.

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Do you have suggestions for improvement in Faculty Ombuds and/or conflict resolution services on campus?

Do great work!

No

Encourage HR to make use of the Faculty Ombuds when dealing with cases of disputes between faculty members that require intervention.