



Report on the  
Faculty Ombuds Office  
*July 2012- June 2013*

*Prepared by Charmaine Tomczyk, Faculty Ombuds and  
Submitted to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (S. Madden, S. Royce  
and D. Breede) and to the Interim Provost (R. Byington)*

*July 2, 2013*

# Executive Summary

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## Background

The Coastal Carolina University 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 (one-third) basis since 2008. She became a Certified Organizational Ombuds Practitioner (CO-OP<sub>R</sub>) by 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. This report is the sixth one to the university community. Earlier reports can be accessed at <http://www.coastal.edu/ombuds/reports.html>

Ombuds services adhere to the International Ombudsman Association’s (IOA) Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and Best Practices ([www.internationalombudsmanassociation.org](http://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

During 2012/2013 there were 87 contacts made for ombuds services, a 54% increase over the previous year. Contact hours plus related research time represented nearly ninety hours.

The three most frequently presented categories of issues were Evaluative Relationships (54 times), Organizational, Strategic and Mission Related issues (37 times) and Career Progression and Development (35 times), Details on these and other issues are available later in this report.

The main types of assistance provided were individual consultations (offering strategies and options to help visitors resolve their issues), general information (regarding answering questions regarding policy, procedures and practices) and group facilitation and/or informal mediation (encouraging positive communication between or among colleagues and supervisors.). Other assistance involved shuttle diplomacy wherein the Ombuds (with the permission of the visitor) served as a go-between for third party intervention to clarify issues and concerns. The ombuds also assisted in facilitating conversations among groups to help resolve conflicts and improve communication.

The annual spring Faculty Ombuds survey administered by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analysis yielded 103 respondents. The results of that survey are noted in the 3-page appendix to this report (page 9).

## Recommendations

- A. It is recommended that the University Promotion and Tenure Committee review and recommend revisions to the post tenure procedures (consistent with their committee purpose, Faculty Manual 2012-2013 page 21) with specific consideration to the external letters process:
1. Extending timelines for collection of external referee letters (such as establishing, validating and securing the list of referees in the early summer prior to the Fall submission of the files (in preparation for possible exceptional ratings)
  2. Phoning references for the first contact instead of emailing and also sending the dossiers to references electronically rather than postal mail. This may yield more and faster responses. Further, consider allowing the deans the opportunity to delegate this task to their associate/assistant deans if they choose, as this too may expedite the processes.
  3. If the first round of referees' names does not yield results, then consider allowing only the dean and the candidate to determine alternate referees (thereby eliminating the need for a meeting, as required per the Manual, among the dean, the chair and the candidate again)

When the CCU post-tenure policy and procedures were first developed and for years afterwards, the numbers of professors / librarians eligible for "exceptional" rating were very low. Now that more faculty members are eligible at this level, it has become apparent that the process to gather external letters as outlined in the Faculty Manual should be reviewed for possible revisions in order to increase the likelihood of a completed file for timely review by the various individuals and groups.

- B. Based on the Ombuds' five years of visitors' issues and concerns, it is recommended that the university consider offering an informal exit interview process for faculty members who voluntarily leave CCU employment. The exit interview could be conducted confidentially by the ombuds office so that only aggregate data would be provided to protect anonymity. Discovering reasons why faculty leave CCU may be helpful to CCU in improving faculty experiences and retention at CCU. Some corporate ombuds offices offer this service using IOA best practices of confidentiality and companies have found the results beneficial.
- C. Last year, it was recommended that a Charter Agreement should be drafted and approved for the CCU Ombuds Office. A draft Charter, or terms of reference, has been created by the ombuds and requires administrative review and approval. A charter is an expected IOA standard for established Ombuds Offices. It affirms the essential characteristics of the ombuds function and sets forth the authority and responsibilities of the office within the university. The Charter also states the understanding about the ombuds office not accepting notice on behalf of the university as well as responsibilities for any mandatory reporting by the office as per law, statute or university policy.
- D. Furthermore, the Charter 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, strategic options for problem solving and expanding opportunities for

development of the Ombuds and ombuds services, especially as the position remains a sole practitioner.

- E. It is recommended that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Interim Provost begin the process of identifying a Faculty Ombuds for 2014, as the current ombuds' term ends Dec 31, 2013. If the previous procedures are applied, then a call for internal candidates would be distributed in early fall semester 2013 and subsequent interviews of final candidates by the Faculty Senators would be scheduled late fall for a Spring 2014 start date.

## July 2012 - June 2013 Activities

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### I. Contacts

A contract is defined as a visit to the ombuds office, an email to the ombuds, a phone call to the ombuds or another communication to the ombuds. Compared to fifty-six (56) contacts last year, this year there were eighty-seven (87) contacts, an increase of more than 50% .

This year's contacts represented individuals from all colleges and the library. The distribution of contacts by unit is similar to past years, and in part is reflective of unit size. See Figure 1 below.

This year's contacts expressed a variety of issues 233 times, compared to 188 the previous year. Issues are categorized using the *Uniform Reporting Categories*, which are endorsed by the International Ombudsman Association and stated later in this report.

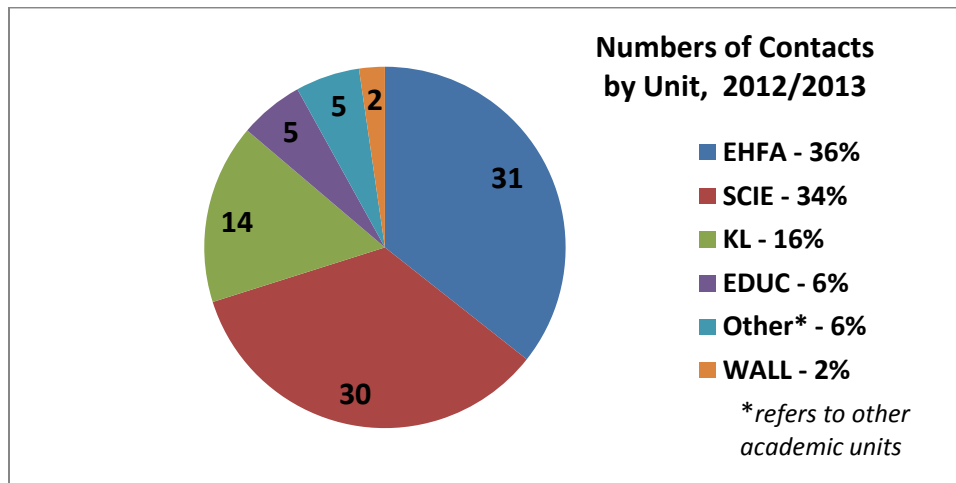


Figure 1

Figure 2 below shows the distribution by college of total hours provided by the Ombuds to faculty contacts.

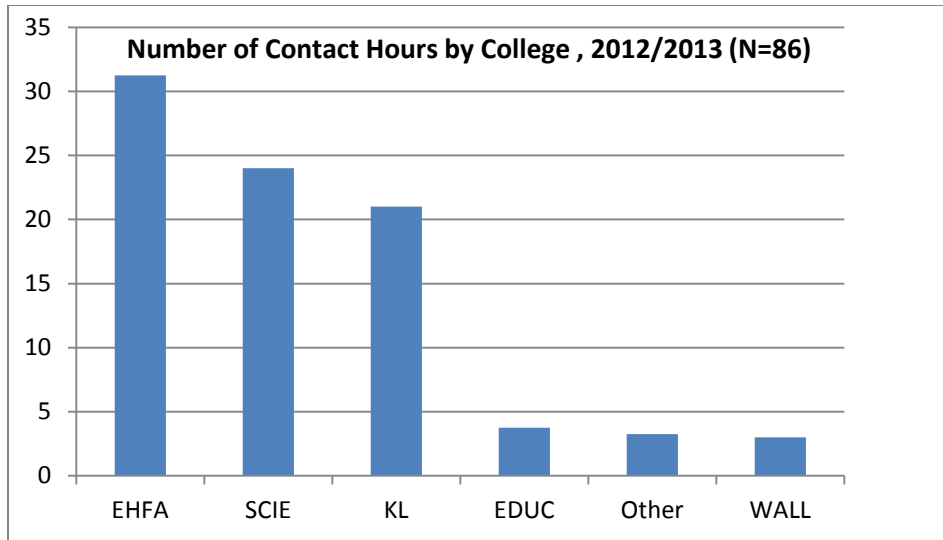
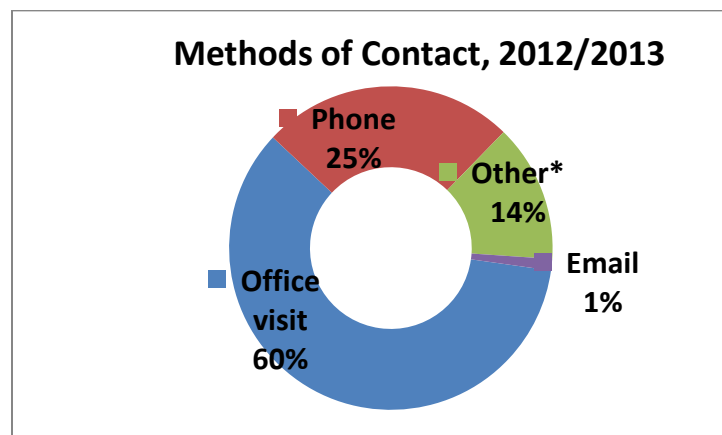


Figure 2

The prevalent method of contacting the Ombuds was by visiting the office in Sands Hall room 111. Whenever possible and most appropriate, face-to-face meetings are the Ombuds's preferred method of contact. As email and voicemail are not considered confidential methods, faculty members were encouraged to visit the Ombuds office. Knowing that phone messages are linked to the email system, faculty members have nearly eliminated leaving messages or 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 commented that they had no difficulty finding the office. The Other data category tracked in Figure 3 below includes meetings elsewhere on and off campus. Whatever method of contact is used, the Ombuds's response time is typically within 24 hours, or sooner when possible.



\*Other refers to meetings at other locations

Figure 3

The Ombuds website pages [www.coastal.edu/ombuds](http://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 and available in Sands Hall 111 or in the Kimbel Library collections (call numbers provided). This year the site's pages were visited 845 times compared to 732 times last year.

The Faculty Ombuds continued to participate in CCU New Faculty Orientations (presentations and Expo exhibits) and distributed printed brochures about ombuds services.

## 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. Individual contacts often contain multiple issues simultaneously and all are counted in the data presented here.

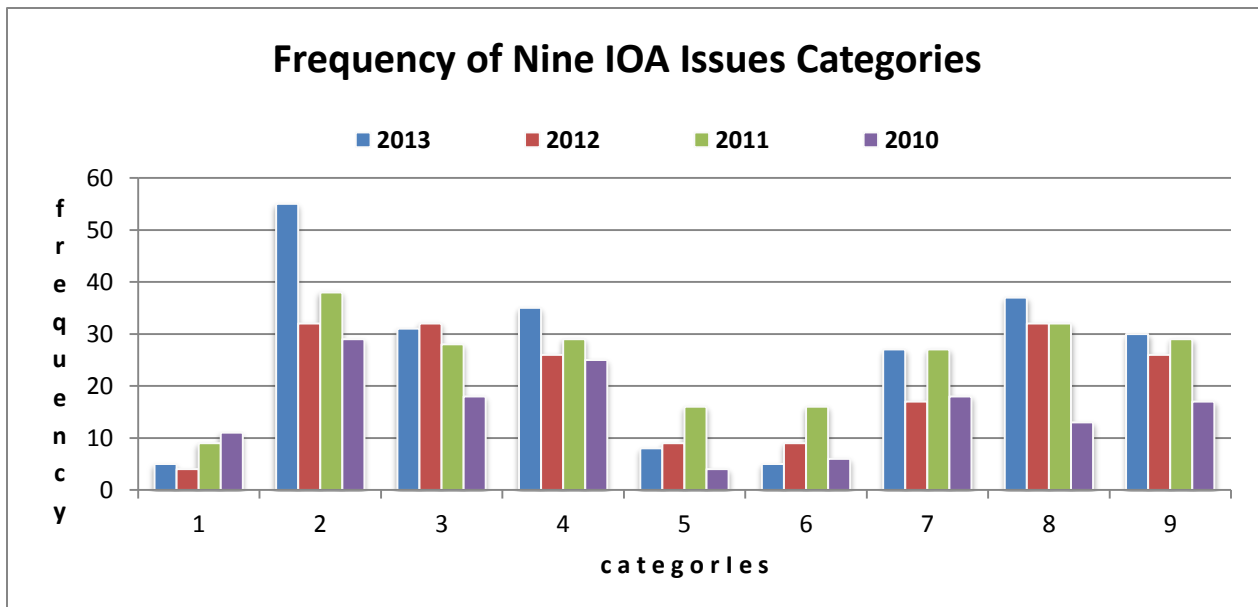


Figure 4

### 1. Compensation & Benefits (Presented 5 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:** pay increases based on point system established within college /

department; delays in compensation resulting from past salary compressions; perceived inequity regarding extra compensation for additional work.

## **2. Evaluative Relationships (Presented 55 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:** department climate, collegiality among and between Chair and faculty member(s) and/or among faculty members; concerns over inequity of treatment, assignments and schedules; disagreements over performance appraisals and evaluations

## **3. Peer and Colleague Relationships (Presented 31 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, lack of collegiality; disrespectful or unfair treatment in written or verbal communication leading to distrust and loss of integrity

## **4. Career Progression and Development (Presented 35 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:** questions and concerns about job expectations, tenure processes (including evaluative performance rubrics) and avenues for career advancement (mentorship and travel funds for development)

## **5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance (Presented 8 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 harassment; scheduling mandatory training and sanctions for non-compliance

## **6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment (Presented 5 times)**

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

**Most frequent concerns:** work-related stress and work-life balance; office environment (air quality / mold); administrations' attention towards door locks (from inside rooms) relating to active shooter training protocol

### **7. Services/Administrative Issues (Presented 27 times)**

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

**Most frequent concerns:** administrative decisions and interpretation / application of policies; lack of responsiveness to concerns raised or disagreements with sanctions imposed on those who violate policies / procedures

### **8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related (Presented 37 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 in daily functions without rationale expressed or without request for feedback before implementation; organizational and departmental climates.

### **9. Values, Ethics, and Standards (Presented 30 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; standards of conduct with various interpretations and unexplained levels of sanctions.

## **III. International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Activities**

The CCU Faculty Ombuds is one of nearly 700 active members (of which about 40% are from the academic sector) in the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), a professional organization committed to supporting ombuds worldwide through training, certification, networking, mentoring and guidance in standards, codes and best practices. Obtaining 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 participated in the 2013 IOA annual conference in Miami, FL., including seminars on confidentiality issues, Title IX compliance issues and expansion of ombuds services (such as exit interviews and employee training workshops).

As an active IOA member, the CCU Faculty Ombuds 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) and being accessible for mentee questions and concerns.



## Summary

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Faculty contacts to the Faculty Ombuds Office have been steadily increasing over the years. Results of the 2013 ombuds survey to faculty and unsolicited feedback from Ombuds Office visitors validate the need and usefulness of the services offered. Unfortunately, many seek assistance at a point when fewer options for resolution are available. As with most issues of concern, early interaction with those directly involved is typically the best approach to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings.

As Coastal Carolina continues to progress and transform its culture to that of a larger institution, attention to the growth, development and nurturing of its faculty members is paramount to providing a quality education to its students. Just as we recognize the need for our students to make connections with the campus community to improve retention and to interact in a respectful manner as per our “community standard”, Coastal should provide campus-wide expectations, opportunities and resources for its faculty to exercise similar collegial interactions with their peers, both within and outside of their departments. While these are challenges of growth, a university priority for such faculty development opportunities could prove beneficial in many ways.

As Faculty Ombuds, I remain grateful for the support of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Provost in making ombuds services available to all faculty and for respecting the International Ombudsmen Association principles and operations practiced by the CCU Ombuds Office. By making the Faculty Ombuds position a permanent one effective last year, the university expressed its commitment to providing alternative channels in support of helping faculty members resolve conflicts and clarify answers to their workplace concerns. It continues to be my privilege to assist in these efforts.

## **Appendix to Faculty Ombuds Report, 2013: Faculty Ombuds Online Survey (responses without comments)**

Faculty Ombuds  
Spring 2013  
N=103

| I am familiar with the Faculty Ombuds office and its services. | #  | %     |
|--|----|-------|
| Yes  | 80 | 77.7% |
| No   | 23 | 22.3% |

| I have contacted the Faculty Ombuds office at Coastal Carolina University | #  | %     |
|---|----|-------|
| Yes   | 19 | 19.0% |
| No  | 81 | 81.0% |

| Please rate the following statements using the scale below.                             | Very Satisfied |       | Satisfied |       | Dissatisfied |      | Very Dissatisfied |      | NA |
|---|----------------|-------|-----------|-------|--------------|------|-------------------|------|----|
|   | #              | %     | #         | %     | #            | %    | #                 | %    | #  |
| I was able to meet with the ombuds in a reasonable amount of time.                      | 18             | 94.7% | 1         | 5.3%  | 0            | 0.0% | 0                 | 0.0% | 3  |
| The ombuds gave me the opportunity to express my concerns.                              | 19             | 95.0% | 1         | 5.0%  | 0            | 0.0% | 0                 | 0.0% | 2  |
| The ombuds seemed to understand my concerns.  | 17             | 85.0% | 2         | 10.0% | 0            | 0.0% | 1                 | 5.0% | 2  |
| The ombuds helped me identify and evaluate my options.                                  | 15             | 75.0% | 4         | 20.0% | 0            | 0.0% | 1                 | 5.0% | 2  |
| The ombuds had knowledge of or was able to locate applicable policies and procedures.   | 14             | 73.7% | 3         | 15.8% | 1            | 5.3% | 1                 | 5.3% | 3  |
| The ombuds was courteous and respectful.  | 19             | 95.0% | 1         | 5.0%  | 0            | 0.0% | 0                 | 0.0% | 2  |
| The ombuds was neutral and fair.  | 17             | 85.0% | 3         | 15.0% | 0            | 0.0% | 0                 | 0.0% | 2  |
| I trust the Ombuds to maintain my confidentiality.                                      | 19             | 90.5% | 2         | 9.5%  | 0            | 0.0% | 0                 | 0.0% | 1  |
| I would refer others to the Ombuds Office.  | 18             | 85.7% | 2         | 9.5%  | 1            | 4.8% | 0                 | 0.0% | 1  |
| Overall, how satisfied are you with the services the Ombuds Office has provided to you? | 16             | 84.2% | 3         | 15.8% | 0            | 0.0% | 0                 | 0.0% | 2  |

| Please rate the following statements using the scale below.                 | Strongly Agree |       | Agree |       | Disagree |      | Strongly Disagree |      | Not sure |       |
|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|------|-------------------|------|----------|-------|
|   | #              | %     | #     | %     | #        | %    | #                 | %    | #        | %     |
| If I needed the services of the Ombuds Office, I would access them.         | 47             | 45.6% | 32    | 31.1% | 6        | 5.8% | 3                 | 2.9% | 15       | 14.6% |
| Coastal Carolina University faculty benefit from the services of an Ombuds. | 47             | 46.1% | 26    | 25.5% | 2        | 2.0% | 0                 | 0.0% | 27       | 26.5% |

| How did you find out about the Ombuds Office? | #  | %     |
|---|----|-------|
| Faculty colleague                             | 12 | 12.0% |
| Faculty Senate                                | 13 | 13.0% |
| New Faculty Orientation                       | 24 | 24.0% |
| Ombuds brochure                               | 2  | 2.0%  |
| Ombuds website                                | 3  | 3.0%  |
| University or College meetings                | 27 | 27.0% |
| University news release                       | 5  | 5.0%  |
| Other   | 14 | 14.0% |

| What other ways did you find out about the Ombuds Office?                                 |
|---|
| Faculty colleague and university meeting. Was aware of service but reminders are helpful. |
| Faculty welfare and development committee   |
| Have known Charmaine since she started as ombuds, and before that in the library.         |
| I have not heard of the Ombuds office.  |
| Just heard of this through this e-mail.   |
| The request to take a survey  |
| This email (x3)   |
| This survey (x4)  |