



ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2012-2013



THE UNIVERSITY
of
WISCONSIN
MADISON

Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2012-2013

THE VISITORS

Demographic Characteristics

- 95 total number of Visitors
- 52% academic staff; 14% faculty (10 tenured, 3 non-tenured); 24% classified staff; 7% student employees, 3% non-university community members
- 12% targeted minority status
- 64 % female
- 71% employed at UW-Madison for more than 5 years

Their General Concerns

- 243 total number of issues presented (some Visitors have multiple concerns)
- 52% reported concern with evaluative and supervisory relationships
- 18% reported conflicts with peers or colleagues
- 12% reported concerns about career progression
- 5% reported concerns with employee compensation and benefits
- 4% reported concerns with values, ethics, standards
- 3% reported concerns with legal, regulatory, or financial issues
- 3% reported problems with administrative and organizational matters or leadership
- 1% reported concerns with safety, health, or physical environment

Specific Examples of Concerns

- issues relating to a lack of effective supervision
- position security or ambiguity
- potential termination or non-renewal
- performance appraisal and general equity of treatment
- problems associated with a lack of a good departmental climate
- co-worker or supervisory conflict involving incivility, disrespect, or bullying
- inadequate mentoring and support for career development
- lack of clarity and regularity in procedures for performance reviews
- lack of adequate compensation

Ombuds' Actions with Visitors

- 84% assistance with clarifying issues
- 74% act as sounding board
- 59% generation of alternative approaches to solve identified problems
- 16% provided information to our Visitor
- 10% sought information or assistance for our Visitor from other people within the University
- 4% arranged meetings among the visitor and University staff in a position to help
- 4% acted as intermediaries in informal mediation. We sometimes accompanied the Visitor to these arranged meetings.
- 3% with the agreement of the Visitor, we contacted the visitor's supervisor for information

THE OMBUDS

Outreach and Related Activities

- Consultations with individuals directly related to specific visitors
- Visits with campus leaders and units to prompt referral of Visitors: Letters and Science department chairs and directors; Academic Staff Executive Committee; Academic Staff Assembly; University Committee; Faculty Senate; Housing supervisory staff; Union representatives.
- Presentations on Ombuds' services in all Equity Workshops for graduate assistants
- Participation at campus events to publicize Ombuds' services: e.g., Diversity Forum; Graduate Student Resource Fair; Benefits Fair; Academic Staff Assembly; New Chairs and Director's Orientation; OVPDC Retreat; Badger Watch Safety conference; Academic Staff Leadership Institute; OVPDC leadership series
- Liaison to Human Resources Working Group, Bascom Working Group, OVPDC, Medical and Pharmacy Schools Ombuds
- Ongoing conversations with UW Police, the PEOPLE Program, and the L&S Student Services Office about improved workplace climate
- Planned and hosted 10th Summer Meeting of Academic Ombuds (July 22-23, 2012; a full report was provided in the Annual Report for 2011-2012)

Observed Problematic Trends on Campus

- lowering of morale because of budget constraints and reorganization
- general anxiety concerning the uncertain nature of positions
- job dissatisfaction leading to thoughts of (early) retirement
- performance evaluation policies and procedures for academic staff
- civility among faculty, academic and classified staff
- impacts of ineffective human resource management by inexperienced or untrained supervisors on vulnerable staff
- timely communication to staff being affected by supervisory, location, and

procedural changes in the unit, e.g., crisis management, fiscal concerns.

Future Directions for the Ombuds Office

- continue to address UW workplace climate problems and participate in the initiative to address “bullying” on campus
- accommodate Ombuds’ practice to HR re-design
- reach out to Classified Staff and underserved communities of workers, e.g., language and cultural minorities, late-shift workers
- continue to build a constituency of campus partners to support Ombuds’ services
- identify and disseminate “Best Practices” for achieving workplace equity and improving workplace climate
- optimize opportunities for professional development of Ombuds staff
- continue to provide leadership to Midwest community of academic Ombuds

Accountability of Ombuds Office

The confidential nature of the services provided by Ombuds precludes an outcome assessment by visitors or third parties. Thus, we gauge our effectiveness through such indices as the timeliness of making initial contacts with Visitors, the number and range of interventions provided to visitors, and unsolicited feedback from Visitors and other Ombuds and HR providers. A number of our visitors have told us that their colleagues have recommended our services, and this we believe reflects our positive impact on the university community. Quality assurance is maintained through weekly staffing meetings in which all on-going cases are discussed in detail. These meetings take place in our offices in Lowell Hall, and at least once per month we meet with our full-time counterpart, Ombuds Rosa Garner, on the Health Sciences campus. While some cases may be resolved in one meeting, others present a variety of challenges and require multiple meetings. Generally we encounter our visitors in one-on-one sessions, but certain circumstances have necessitated group encounters. In addition to visitor-centered activities, the impact on the campus community can be observed in our modeling of effective communication and problem-solving strategies with others in the Visitors’ work environments. Finally, we attempt to generalize what we learn in working with specific individuals to the larger campus community.