

University
Ombuds
Office
Biennial
Report

2009-
2011

Kellie Harmon, University Ombuds
Prof. Maria Orive, Faculty Ombuds
Prof. Stephen Grabow, Alternate Faculty Ombuds

University of
Kansas, Lawrence

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University Ombuds Office Biennial Report University of Kansas

**July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010
& July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011**

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According to the University Senate Rules and Regulations, Article VI, Section 2.2.2, the University Ombuds Office shall submit an annual report to the University community. The purpose of this report is to summarize the activities of the University Ombuds Office and identify important trends the Office observed during the 2009-2011 academic years. Due to Ombuds confidentiality, this is done in a generic way without identifying individuals, units, or departments.

The University and Faculty Ombuds wish to stress that the University Ombuds Office is voluntary, thus, the Office does not see every person that has a particular issue. The following report will discuss trends the University Ombuds Office observed which may or may not be trends of the University as a whole; however, the trends the Ombuds Office observed are noteworthy, hopefully fostering discussion, attention, and possible policy review and implementation.

ROLE AND MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY OMBUDS OFFICE

The mission of the University Ombuds Office is to ensure that all members of the University community receive fair and equitable treatment. The Ombuds Office carries out its mission via two complementary approaches: (1) receiving and attempting to resolve individual grievances on a confidential, informal basis; and 2) supporting systems change that advance the goal of a fair conflict management system.

The University Ombuds Office assists students, staff, faculty, alumni, and others who have questions, concerns, complaints or disputes regarding University policies and procedures as well as to manage unproductive conflict in the workplace, classroom, or other campus settings. The role of an Ombuds includes, but is not limited to, consultation, shuttle diplomacy, coaching, conciliation, and/or facilitation, and providing information and referrals to other university resources.

It is important that access to the University Ombuds Office is available to all members of the University community. The Ombuds role is unique and differs from any other position at the University of Kansas because the Ombuds Office is independent, impartial, confidential and informal and, thus, is not an office of notice to the University. Most importantly, the University Ombuds Office is voluntary. No one should tell someone that he or she must visit the Office, nor should someone be told that he or she cannot visit the Office. It has come to the Ombuds' attention that a few members of the University community have told their staff not to visit the Ombuds Office. Such a statement may be considered a form of retaliation and violates the Ombuds principle of independence and interferes with the legitimate performance of an Ombuds' duties (see "Principles of an Ombuds" below).

Anyone has the right to visit with an Ombuds voluntarily and the Ombuds Office can assist individuals as long as the visitor is not already involved in a formal grievance, appeal, or litigation process nor has hired an attorney in connection with their case. One translations of the word “ombudsman,” is a “person who has an ear to the people.” The Ombuds Office is an ear to the entire campus community and everyone has a right to be heard. In addition, the Ombuds Office is given authority to perform its duties by the Chancellor and University Governance. These responsibilities are described in the University Senate Rules and Regulations (6.2.2). Furthermore, the Board of Regents has recently amended its complaint process to establish “an office of ombudsman or similar point of contact ... for initiating a particular complaint or grievance” (see page 16 of this report). Please contact the Ombuds Office if you have questions about the Ombuds role.

The Ombuds at the University of Kansas belong to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and adheres to its Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. The University of Kansas Ombuds Office also has a “Standard of Best Practices” for its unit that was supported by University Governance, the Chancellor, and the Provost in February, 2008. These documents can be found at our website located at www.ombuds.ku.edu.

PRINCIPLES OF AN OMBUDS

There are four main principles of an Ombuds as described in both Standard of Best Practices documents: 1) Informality; 2) Independence; 3) Confidentiality; and 4) Impartiality.

Informal: The University Ombuds Office is “informal” and “off-the-record”. An Ombuds facilitates communication when conflict arises and provides an opportunity for informal dispute resolution. The Ombuds Office is a supplement, not a replacement, for formal channels, and formal complaints are not filed here. **The use of the Ombuds Office is voluntary** and no one can be mandated to visit the office nor can someone be mandated not to visit the office. ***An Ombuds does not make judgments, request or enforce disciplinary action, or participate in any internal or external formal proceedings, nor shall Ombuds participate as witnesses with respect to confidential communication.*** The Ombuds Office also must cease assistance if the visitor is involved in a formal grievance process or an attorney becomes involved in the dispute. As an informal, “off-the-record” resource, conversations with this Office do not serve as “notice” to the University.

Independent: To ensure objectivity, the University Ombuds Office operates independently of other campus resources, offices, and units. The University Ombuds Office is not part of the formal “chain-of-command” and visiting with an Ombuds does not mean someone is skipping over positions in the hierarchal chain. In addition, ***the University Ombuds Office must be free from interference in the legitimate performance of its duties.*** Due to the Office’s independence, and because the Office is not part of University administration, the only agenda is to encourage communication, to create an environment where issues are safely brought forward, and to promote the management of conflict, fairness and cooperation throughout the University.

Confidential: The University Ombuds Office is confidential. ***An Ombuds will not talk with anyone or do anything about an issue without the visitor’s permission.*** An exception to upholding confidentiality is if an Ombuds has reasonable concern about serious risk of imminent harm. The University Ombuds Office is an impartial, confidential resource for every person involved in the dispute and anyone can contact the Ombuds Office at any time as long as they are not involved in a formal process. ***The University Ombuds Office does not keep records on behalf of the university. An Ombuds will not receive documents from visitors nor keep “on file” any information given to the office.***

Impartial: *An Ombuds is not an advocate for individuals but is an advocate for fair process.* An Ombuds will not side with the visitor who originally brought the issue, nor does the Ombuds Office side with others involved in the dispute. Due to Ombuds impartiality, the University Ombuds Office does not have a stake in the outcome of a situation brought to the Ombuds attention. The Ombuds Office does not impose solutions because that would impede impartiality, but suggests options and offers advice so that visitors can address concerns more effectively.

VALUE OF AN OMBUDS OFFICE

There are many advantages for an organization to have an Ombuds Office. One of the most important advantages is that because the Ombuds Office is confidential and “off-the-record,” people can feel free to bring issues forward in a safe environment without fear of retaliation or judgment. This encourages people to come forward and talk about issues that might not otherwise surface.

The International Ombudsman Association (IOA) provides the following list of the many benefits of having an Ombuds Office:

- Offers a safe place for members of the [university community] to discuss concerns and understand options without fear of retaliation or fear that formal action will be taken simply by raising concerns.
- Helps identify undetected and/or unreported criminal or unethical behavior, policy violations, or ineffective leadership.
- Helps employees [and students] become empowered and take responsibility for creating a better workplace [and educational environment].
- Facilitates two-way, informal communication and dispute resolution to resolve allegations of harassment, discrimination and other workplace issues that could otherwise escalate into time-consuming and expensive formal complaints or lawsuits.
- Provides the ability to address subtle forms of insensitivity and unfairness that do not rise to the level of a formal complaint but nonetheless create a disempowering work [and educational] environment.
- Aids compliance with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and the U.S. Federal sentencing guidelines.
- Provides an early warning diagnosis system that identifies and alerts institutions about new negative trends.
- Helps employee [and student] satisfaction, morale and retention by humanizing the institution through the establishment of a resource that provides safe and informal opportunities to be heard.
- Provides upward feedback to management about organizational trends.
- Helps avoid negative press by addressing issues at the lowest and most direct level possible.
- Provides the organization with an independent and impartial voice, which fosters consistency between organizational values and actions.
- Serves as a central information and referral resource for policies, processes and resources within the organization.

From: IOA website,
<http://www.ombudsassociation.org/resources/ombuds-benefits-organizations>

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Conflict is an inevitable part of a large, complex organization. While it is unrealistic to solve all of the conflicts that occurs on campus, it is realistic to aspire to identify issues and try to manage the conflict once it occurs. One of the ways the Ombuds Office identifies concerns is by keeping track of trends and patterns of issues that are brought to this office. In adherence to the ombuds principle of confidentiality, this is done without keeping any identifiable information. This report addresses some of the issues the Ombuds Office observed in the last two years from July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010 & July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011.

These numbers represent visitors who contacted the Ombuds Office either by telephone, in person, or by e-mail. The Ombuds Office uses the term, “visitor” to describe people who come to the Office for assistance. Although not a perfect term because sometimes assistance is provided over the telephone, it more appropriately describes the nature of contacts given the Ombuds neutral role.

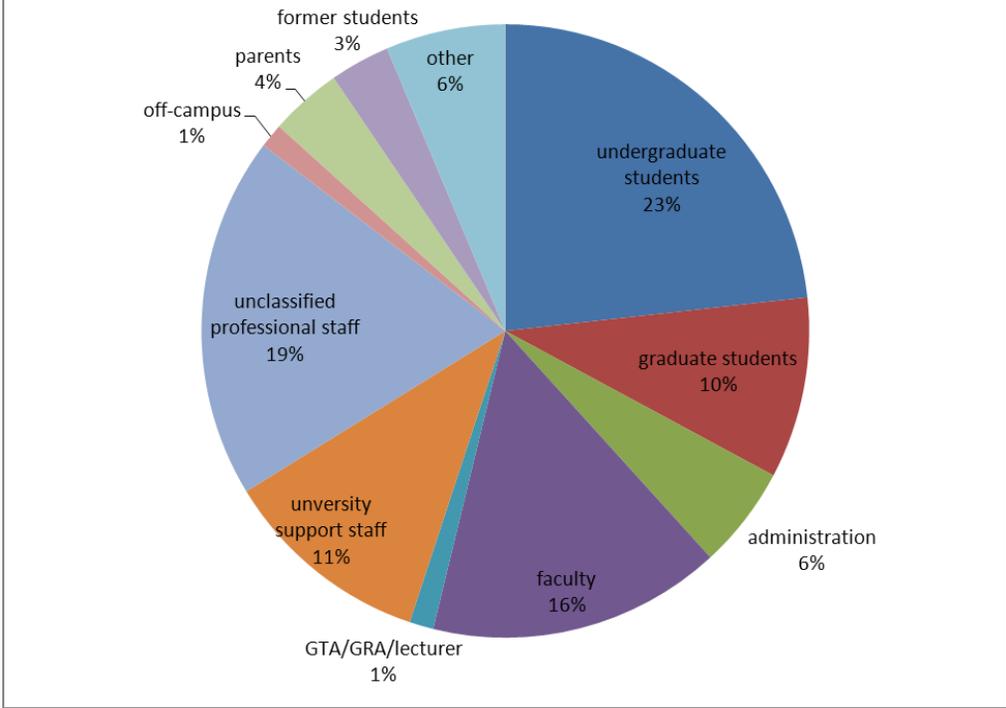
The contact is only counted once, so if the Ombuds Office consulted with a visitor multiple times on the same issue, the contact is not counted again. The time and response to visitors varies from a brief consultation to a large amount of time involving other individuals and campus units. The more complex the issue, the more time and additional follow-up is needed.

July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010: From July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010, the Ombuds Office had almost 400 contacts. These contacts can be divided into “primary contacts” (individuals that first contact the University Ombuds Office) and “secondary contacts” (other individuals contacted in the situation, which may also include individuals providing information and consultation). The Ombuds Office had contact with at least 87 different university units and departments.

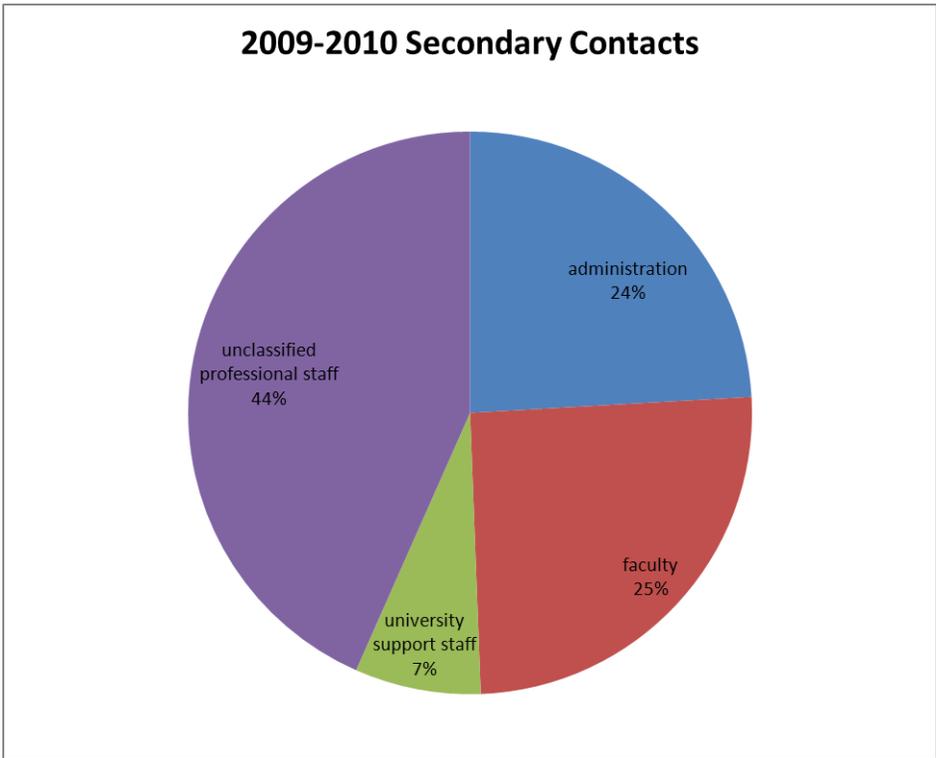
Table 1. 2009 – 2010 Contacts	
Primary Contacts	316
Undergraduate students	73
Graduate students	30
Administration	17
Faculty	49
GTA/GRA/Lecturer	4
University support staff	35
Unclassified professional staff	60
Parents/Guardians	12
Off-campus	4
Former students	10
*Other	20
Secondary Contacts	82
Administration	20
Faculty	21
University support staff	6
Unclassified professional staff	36
Total	398

*Other: includes other ombuds, anonymous or unknown status, or other staff.

2009-2010 Primary Contacts



2009-2010 Secondary Contacts



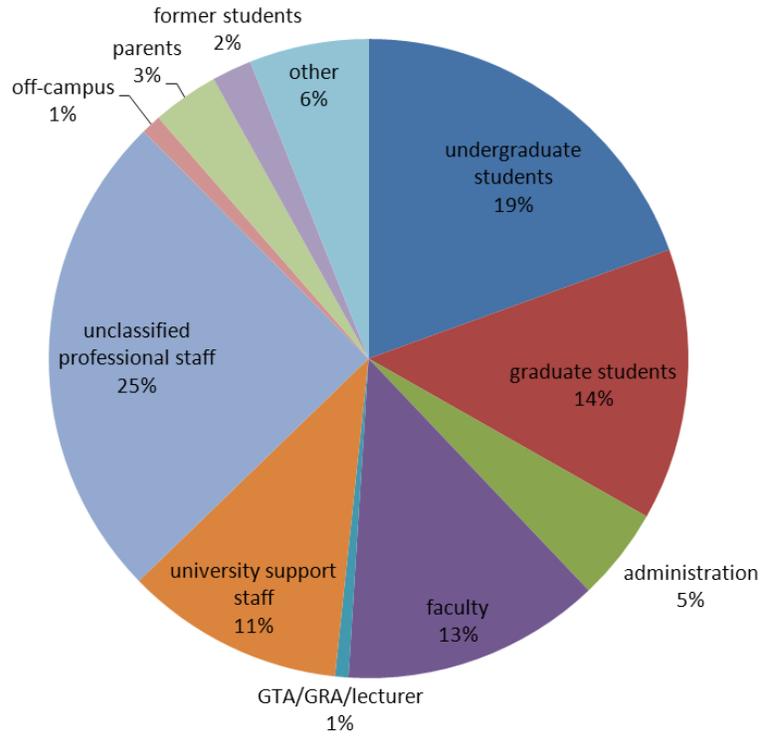
July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011: From July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011, the Ombuds Office again had nearly 400 contacts (388 total contacts). These contacts can be divided into “primary contacts” (individuals that first contact the University Ombuds Office) and “secondary contacts” (other individuals contacted in the situation, which may also include individuals providing information and consultation). During 2010 – 2011, the Ombuds Office had contact with at least 82 different university units and departments.

Table 2. 2010 – 2011 Contacts	
Primary Contacts	305
Undergraduate students	58
Graduate students	41
Administration	14
Faculty	39
GTA/GRA/Lecturer	2
University support staff	33
Unclassified professional staff	74
Parents/Guardians	10
Off-campus	3
Former students	6
*Other	18
Secondary Contacts	83
Administration	17
Faculty	21
GTA/GRA/Lecturer	3
University support staff	12
Unclassified professional staff	28
*Other	2
Total	388

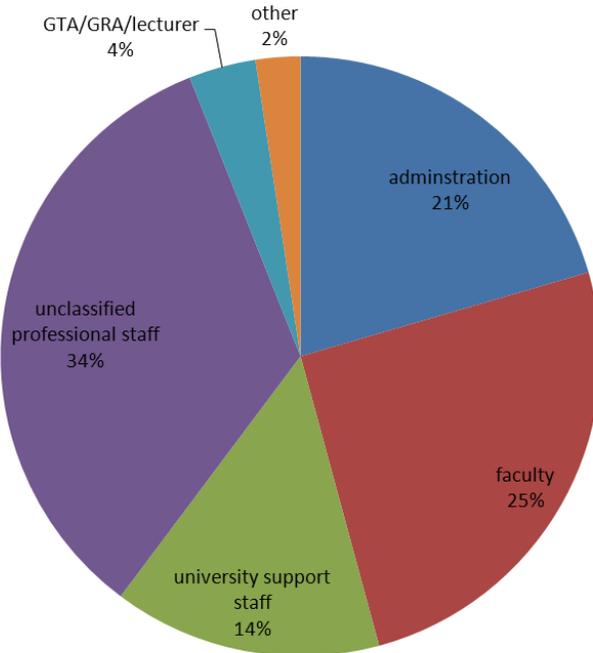
*Other: includes other ombuds, anonymous or unknown status, or other staff.

In comparing the percentages of primary contacts from various categories in 2010-2011 with those from 2009-2010 (see page 7 and page 9), there is a slight shift to a smaller percentage of undergraduate students and a larger percentage of graduate students visiting the Office in 2010-2011. There is also an increase in the percentage of primary contacts that were unclassified professional staff. Overall, the categories for both primary and secondary contacts were relatively consistent across these two years.

2010-2011 Primary Contacts



2010-2011 Secondary Contacts



MOST COMMON ISSUES FOR SEEKING OMBUDS OFFICE ASSISTANCE

The list below describes issues that were brought to the Ombuds Office by students, faculty, and staff *in order of frequency with the largest number of issues brought to this office listed first:*

Unclassified Professional Staff Issues:

- Conflict with supervisor or colleague
- Alleged bullying, civility and work environment concerns
- Conflict/complaint about a university unit or specific staff person
- Health and disability concerns
- Consult regarding a student issue
- Non-reappointment

Undergraduate Student Issues

- Grade(s)
- Course management (how assignments are graded, exam issues, participation points, attendance, lack of feedback from instructor, other conflicts with instructor, etc.)
- Academic misconduct
- Enrollment, residency, tuition
- Exams
- “Clickers”
- Graduation requirements and/or advising
- Fees and fines
- Conflict with a particular unit or staff person in a unit

Graduate Student Issues:

- Conflict with advisor
- Grade(s)
- Conflict with instructor or faculty member
- Thesis/dissertation
- Conflict with department
- Funding
- Academic misconduct

Faculty Issues:

- Conflict with colleague(s), chair, dean
- Promotion and tenure
- Teaching load or other work-related concerns
- University policy consultation
- Consultation regarding a student matter
- Faculty rights consultation

University Support Staff Issues:

- Performance evaluation and/or disciplinary concerns
- Conflict with supervisor
- Civility, work environment, alleged bullying
- Health and disability concerns
- Confidentiality concerns

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTARY

The trends the Ombuds Office observed for 2009 – 2010 and 2010 – 2011 dealt mostly with staff and faculty work-related concerns, although there was an increase in the number of graduate students who contacted the Office and this issue is briefly discussed as well. Below is a list of the trends with a brief commentary for each. For a more in depth conversation about these issues, or if you have any questions, please contact the University Ombuds Office.

Trends Observed:

1. Work-related stress and morale issues

During tough budgetary times, and with staff and faculty trying to “do more with less,” an increase in conflict and work-related concerns is not surprising. Organizational changes, budget cuts, lack of pay raises while taking on more responsibility, all can cause a great deal of stress and increase the frequency and intensity of work-related conflict. Some staff and faculty expressed feeling “trapped” and “overwhelmed” because the state of the job market is poor and there is a lack of other opportunities. Naturally, stress affects people in different ways. For example, an employee may have concerns at work and these issues may be out of proportion to what is actually occurring. The employee may have responded more positively and proactively if the employee had not felt overwhelmed or faced economic hardship.

2. Incivility and alleged “bullying” in the workplace

Some, but not all, of the incivility and alleged bullying concerns heard by the Ombuds Office are related to Trend #1: work-related stress and morale issues. At times, employees express the concern that some fellow employees are angry and “take it out” on others. From the perspective of some staff members who visited the office, they experienced bullying in the workplace. The Ombuds Office sometimes only hears the perspective of the visitor who came to the office (which is one reason why an Ombuds does not make judgments and why an Ombuds must remain impartial); however, the visitors were affected strongly enough that they felt it was important to make an appointment with an Ombuds.

Some concerns brought to the Ombuds Office may not have risen to the level of bullying but could possibly be classified as “incivility.” The difference between bullying and incivility is often a matter of perspective. There are many different definitions of bullying; most of the literature, however, states that bullying is a repeated negative behavior that causes harm or mistreatment to one or more individuals. For more information, an excellent reference is Namie & Namie (2000), *The Bully at Work*.

Usually, whether the behavior is incivility or bullying, it does not rise to the level of a policy violation, leaving the person who brought forward the allegation in a very vulnerable position and without many options. One consideration is to develop a general harassment policy or a civility code and include it in procedures and training. In addition, it may be useful to have a discussion led by the supervisor (or Chair, Director, Dean, etc.) regarding ethical standards, how to support a healthy, civil workplace environment, and what to do if an employee feels they are not being treated according to appropriate standards. It is also important to keep in mind that any policy should incorporate due process for the employee being accused. All participants in the grievance process should be treated fairly and the grievance should be dealt with in a timely manner.

(Cummings, Lydia & Rowe, Mary. *LERA*, September, 2010. "Concerns about Bullying at Work as Heard by Organizational Ombudsmen").

3. Some employees are fearful of bringing forward concerns to university officials

One benefit of having an Ombuds Office is that it encourages people to come forward. A visitor knows they can visit with an Ombuds in complete confidence and not have to fear judgment or reprisal. With the visitor's permission (sometimes the visitor wishes to remain anonymous), many issues are brought to the attention of the administration or other appropriate officials that otherwise may not have surfaced. However, a troubling trend the Ombuds Office observed is employees who are not comfortable bringing issues forward to their supervisor or another appropriate official on campus. From the perspective of some university employees, when they voiced concerns to an official on campus, it was not kept confidential, or they felt their situation was not taken seriously or listened to. Some employees expressed feeling betrayed and subject to retaliation as a result of bringing an issue forward. Also, an employee may witness another staff member bringing an issue forward and observe a negative outcome; thus, fearing the same outcome, the employee keeps silent.

A culture of fear and distrust will keep employees and students from bringing their issues forward. The consequences of not bringing issues forward may be problematic to the institution in a variety of ways. For example, if the concerns are buried and ignored, the issue may escalate, making the conflict worse. If an employee fears retaliation, they may resign and leave the university, leaving the underlying issue unresolved. There are also many other consequences that could result in legal and ethical implications if individuals fear bringing forward concerns to the appropriate university officials.

Whether the fear of reprisal is real or perceived, it is important that the University create a trusting work environment where employees and students feel comfortable bringing issues forward. Employees and students need to trust that they will be protected. The University already has some policies in place to help protect employees. One is the Whistleblower Policy which can be found in the KU Policy Library online at https://documents.ku.edu/policies/Internal_Audit/Whistleblower.htm.

If a campus member has concerns about bringing an issue forward, he or she may want to have a conversation with the University or Faculty Ombuds to discuss what options are available. If the visitor wants to bring an issue forward to a formal channel, an Ombuds can help direct the visitor to the proper university official.

4. Privacy rights of students.

Every year the University Ombuds Office hears concerns from both undergraduate and graduate students regarding their privacy. Some examples of privacy issues that can arise include faculty talking about personal issues involving a student to other faculty, instructors posting grades by name or other identifiable information in a public space, or an instructor returning homework assignments or tests in manner that does not protect a student's privacy.

The Student Records Policy addresses many of these issues. Also, the Privacy Office website has very helpful information related to student privacy including a list of do's and don'ts for handling student information: [http://www.privacy.ku.edu/student_records/DoDont_Privacy\(FERPA\)2006_.pdf](http://www.privacy.ku.edu/student_records/DoDont_Privacy(FERPA)2006_.pdf)

There are different privacy policies that may or may not apply to a particular situation. For the general privacy policy, please go to the Policy Library on the KU website: <https://documents.ku.edu/policies/provost/PrivacyPolicyGeneral.htm>.

There are also other privacy policies listed in the above document, including the Student Records Policy.

5. “Clickers”

Some students visited the Ombuds Office to discuss problems relating to the use of “clickers” in the classroom. Student concerns included malfunctioning units that could lead to incorrect attendance scores and/or participation points. Additionally, some students were charged with academic misconduct for using another student’s clicker. Instructors can avoid many problems by stating all policies regarding the use of classroom technology early in the semester and as clearly as possible, anticipating the sorts of problems that may arise due to malfunctions, lost units, and other common issues. This also provides an opportunity to clearly notify students of their responsibilities with regard to the use and maintenance of the units, and of the need to notify the instructor promptly in the case of a problem.

6. Faculty rights

An important issue that arose during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 years regarded the rights of faculty members to due process during grievance and/or censure processes. It is important that the University’s policies on these issues be extremely clear to all parties involved, and that policy language in the U.S.R.R. and the Faculty Code of Conduct be consistent and easily interpretable. The University Ombuds Office welcomes discussion of this issue with both administration and Faculty Governance.

7. Graduate student conflicts with their advisor

Because the graduate student/advisor relationship is so central to the successful completion of a graduate degree and to the research and scholarly work of the advisor, conflicts between graduate students and their advisors can be especially difficult and damaging to all parties involved. The details of the conflicts vary greatly from case to case, and so no one solution exists for resolving such conflicts. For this reason, the University Ombuds Office is working on additional outreach to the graduate student community and to faculty and reminds the University that it is a resource for both graduate students and their advisors should such a conflict arise.

OTHER OMBUDS ACTIVITIES

Campus Dispute Assistance Services

If any person or group on campus would like to request mediation services, Campus Dispute Assistance Services (CDAS) is available for this purpose. The Ombuds Office keeps a list of trained faculty mediators who are available for mediation services. Although the Ombuds Office maintains the list and helps recruit mediation volunteers, the office itself is not directly involved in the mediation process. The list of mediators is not made public, but it is important to be aware that mediators are available and volunteer a considerable amount of their time and energy for this very important service.

Threat Assessment Team

The University Ombuds Office is a member of the Threat Assessment Team. This team of various staff members meets on occasion to review situations that potentially may be a threat of violence, but does not involve an immediate threat. For more information about this team, please visit the Human Resources and Equal Opportunity web page at

http://www.hreo.ku.edu/policies_procedures/emergency_procedures/workplace_violence

Professional Development and Activities from July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2011

Ombuds Harmon met the requirements to become a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP) in May, 2010. To become certified, she passed a written exam and an oral interview with a member of the CO-OP Board. In addition, she provided documentation such as the University Ombuds Office brochure, Principles of an Ombuds sheet that is given to visitors of the office, website material, annual reports, and the University of Kansas Ombuds Office Statement of Best Practices document. These documents, along with the interview, provided evidence that she adheres to the International Ombudsman Association's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. The certification lasts for four years and then she will go through the recertification process. Ombuds Harmon needs to accumulate sixty Professional Development Hours (PDH's) within the next four years and then she can apply for recertification. This is a relatively new, voluntary program offered by the International Ombudsman Association and Ombuds Harmon was among the first group of forty-five Ombuds internationally to become certified.

For the academic year, 2009-2010, Ombuds Harmon attended the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) conference in Fall, 2009 which included participation in a pre-conference workshop entitled, "*CLEAR: Three Critical Modules to Take You to the Summit.*" Ombuds Harmon also attended the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) annual conference in April, 2010 and participated in a pre-conference workshop entitled, "*Talking About Fairness in the Workplace: Making Fairness Explicit in Training, Coaching, and Policy.*"

For the academic year, 2010-2011, Ombuds Harmon attended the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) IV-W conference on November 3-5, 2010. In March, 2011, she also attended a webinar sponsored by the American Arbitration Association University, "*Workplace Bullying: The Role of Policies and ADR Systems.*" In April 2011, Ombuds Harmon attended the annual IOA conference in Portland, OR and participated in two pre-conference workshops, "*Resolving Workplace Bullying: A New Approach for Ombudsmen,*" and "*Organizational Integrity: Values in Action.*" In July of 2010, she attended the 8th Annual Summer Meeting of Academic Ombudspersons at Northern Illinois University.

In addition, Ombuds Harmon is involved in volunteer work with IOA serving as a mentor to new ombuds. She was also part of a panel presentation to the Unclassified Senate on "Workplace Conflict" as well as speaking about the Ombuds Office to several university departments and classrooms.

The Faculty Ombuds, Prof. Maria Orive, continued to provide coverage for the office when the University Ombuds was absent and she continues to meet with visitors and other participants as needed. Prof. Orive's assistance has been especially significant in terms of dealing with the increase in contacts with graduate students and for faculty issues. From October 2010 to early January 2011, Ombuds Orive participated in over eleven hours of Threat Assessment Team meetings. Additionally, Ombuds Orive

takes an active role in providing outreach to the University community, particularly graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. Examples include a presentation on the role of the University Ombuds Office at the Department of Chemistry graduate student orientation (8/17/2009) and a discussion of ethics and whistleblowing for a course on research ethics in the School of Engineering (11/18/10).

The alternate Faculty Ombuds, Stephen Grabow, has clocked many hours as an alternate Ombuds. He has devoted a considerable amount of time, mostly voluntary, in assisting Ombuds Harmon and Orive with specific cases and meeting with visitors in addition to “phone duty” when the others are out of town or otherwise absent. Ombuds Harmon and Orive are thankful for his assistance, especially when he has not always been compensated. His assistance is valuable because the Ombuds Office is very busy, there is no staff support on-site, and because it is beneficial to have more than one faculty ombuds in case there is a conflict of interest, or for those cases where gender balance is requested. Also, his participation since 2007 supports the two-faculty Ombuds model as an effective operating standard for future appointments.

EVALUATION OF THE OMBUDS OFFICE

Due to the unique role and confidentiality of the Ombuds Office, the general community often does not hear about positive outcomes that were achieved at least in part due to the involvement of the Ombuds Office. Once a year, an e-mail is sent by University Governance inviting students, staff, and faculty who contacted the Ombuds Office to complete a confidential survey. The Ombuds user survey was sent the beginning of April, 2010 and again in April, 2011. Fifty-eight people responded to the on-line survey in 2010 and forty-four people responded in 2011.

The results of the surveys overwhelmingly indicated that individuals who contacted the office were appreciative of how they were treated by Ombuds Office staff, that they had a positive experience with the office, and that they valued having the Ombuds Office as a confidential resource to address their concerns.

Replies to the user survey indicated that the Ombuds Office contributed to student, staff, and faculty retention at the University of Kansas. Many visitors commented that they felt listened to, were thankful they had a place to go to express their concerns in a confidential manner; and that they felt they were treated with respect and fairness.

In the user survey, when asked, “What would you have done without the University Ombuds Office?” the following sample of anonymous comments demonstrates how the Ombuds Office contributed to student, staff, and faculty retention:

- resigned
- hired an attorney
- would have left K.U.
- would have nowhere else to go
- there would have been an escalation to the problem, additional staff time spent at increasingly higher levels of responsibility and cost

No one solution, department, or university unit can respond effectively to all situations. It is important that the University of Kansas provides both formal and informal options for campus members to address their concerns.

WHO AND WHERE WE ARE

The University Ombuds Office is located in room 34 Carruth O'Leary Hall, 1246 West Campus Road, Lawrence, KS 66045. Our telephone number is (785) 864-7261.

Kellie Harmon, the University Ombuds and full-time staff, is located in room 34, Carruth O'Leary Hall. She has served as University Ombuds since 2007, and was Interim University Ombuds in 2006.

Maria Orive, Faculty Ombuds and a professor in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, began her faculty ombuds tenure beginning in January, 2007. Ombuds Orive can be reached at the Ombuds Office phone number listed above.

Stephen Grabow, the alternate Faculty Ombuds and a professor in the School of Architecture, is located in Marvin Hall but can be reached at the Ombuds Office main phone number listed above. He also began his faculty ombuds tenure in 2007.

The office does not have an administrative assistant on-site so if we are meeting with someone or away for a short-while, please leave a message on the Ombuds Office voice mail, and we will get back to you as soon as we can. To better serve university community members, we recommend scheduling an appointment ahead of time to make sure one of us is available to help a visitor when needed. Due to confidentiality reasons, the University Ombuds Office does not consult over e-mail. We also accept referrals from others. If you feel someone would benefit from our services, please feel free to refer them here.

NEW BOARD OF REGENTS POLICY FOR STATE COMPLAINT PROCESS

In June, 2011, the Kansas Board of Regents presented amendments to the complaint process in the Board's Policy and Procedures Manual. According to the June 8, 2011 minutes, "these amendments will address and meet the requirements of the new federal Program Integrity Rules." Part of this policy includes adopting an Ombuds program:

"G. 10. Complaint Process

- a. Each state university shall establish and enforce explicit procedures to address student grievances and complaints alleging university activity, or a university employee act or omission, that is proscribed by Board or institutional policies. *Each state university shall create, maintain, and advertise an office of ombudsman or similar single point of contact to assist students in determining the appropriate university procedure for initiating a particular complaint or grievance.* (Emphasis added). To view the policy in its entirety, please go to http://www.kansasregents.org/resources/PDF/890-041510PolicyManualrevisedlinks_2_.pdf

The University Ombuds Office welcomes this policy adopted by the Board of Regents. It is hoped that Regents' universities will incorporate Ombuds Offices for their institutions that assist not only students, but faculty and staff as well. The University and Faculty Ombuds also recommend that new Ombuds become a member of the International Ombudsman Association and adhere to its Standard of Practice and Code of Ethics. Ombuds Harmon is available as a resource if anyone in a Regents Institution has questions about establishing an Ombuds Office or needs to get in contact with the international professional organization, IOA.

CONCLUSION

The University Ombuds Office was created in 1977 and will celebrate its 35th year anniversary next year. The Ombuds Office would like to send out a special thank you to University Governance, the Chancellor's and Provost's offices, for their continued support throughout the years.

The Ombuds Office mission is greatly enhanced by the support and cooperation of many individuals who are in positions that can create positive organizational changes on this campus. Their willingness to hear feedback and to collaborate on many issues to try and bring about fair and equitable outcomes is deeply appreciated.

At the University of Kansas, we are all part of a community of scholarship and learning. The Ombuds Office learns much from our visitors during the dialogue and collaborative process that defines the Ombuds role. This role is immensely rewarding and it is a privilege to represent the Ombuds profession and serve the University of Kansas community.