

Interim Ombudsman Report:

To date I've had about 185 interactions as the interim ombudsman. These include phone calls, e-mails, drop in visits, and scheduled appointments. Approximately 60% were from faculty and 40% from staff with only three calls from graduate/resident students. I did not have any contact from faculty or staff from Public Health and Information Sciences, or the Law School. I do not have data on the service units.

My notes indicate that currently I have had 45 in-person interviews counting one tomorrow. These were mostly through appointments, both in my HSC office and several different offices/conference rooms on Belknap Campus. Three employees just dropped in unannounced to tell of their circumstances or frustrations. I had 4 group conferences where both sides were present.

One of my charges was to track informal resolution of the disputes; however, this is realistically impossible in many cases as I have no mechanism for follow-up. Typically, when an employee and I talk, the response I get as we finish up is a warm, "Thank you for listening, for your advice and I'm now feeling much better about my issues." I rarely hear back from these people, but with only 2 staff grievances (That was reported to me by the staff grievance committee chair) and I believe 3 faculty grievances; the ombudsman office is helping to reduce tensions. In anecdotal terms, three deans have commented to me that things seem to be improving significantly.

In more formal situations, I have written 4 letters to Professor Powell, the Faculty Grievance Officer, indicating that faculty persons had come to me as per the Redbook for type 1 grievances. These faculty were not really interested in any informal dispute resolution, but came to me so they could proceed to a grievance and try to extract their pound of flesh.

The issue that I hear about the most is supervisor/employee evaluations. This has three different levels and include staff/staff supervision, faculty supervision of staff and faculty discontent over evaluations and work plans with chairmen and then deans. To me, the bottom line is lack of training as effective supervisors and uniform application of policies. I did deal with three student/ faculty issues and they were resolved with the help of Dean Mardis= Office of Student Affairs.

My charge asked me to make recommendations. The first is not new, but supervision of employees is not uniform and often lacking in compassion and training may help; however, many faculty do not view this as a priority. The second is directed to the staff and that is the recommendation that staff who believe they have been wronged need to work with the ombudsman prior to initiating a grievance and the process could be analogous to the faculty requirement.