

Ombudsman report

Time frame: Jan 30, 2018 to June 30, 2018

There were approximately 25 issues addressed in that period; some were as simple as a phone call to some that required multiple in person meetings. Most of the contacts were from faculty while there were 6 non-faculty inquiries.

There was a bit of humor, at least in my perspective, on some of the non-faculty calls. For example, I had a postdoctoral student ask me to fix his parking ticket and another request was from a father who wanted his son reinstated on the football team.

Many of the faculty issues were centered around work plans and in most cases these were resolved by talking with the faculty and departmental chair or unit deans. During this period, I spoke with three deans. To my knowledge, I believe there have been three faculty grievances filed from this stint as ombuds; although, once my letters go to the Faculty Grievance Officer, my line of formal communication is over. One faculty told me that rather than filing a grievance, they would seek another position in an environment where they felt welcome and needed. As part of my charge, I met with Interim Provost Billingsley in the late spring and discussed concerns that may need his review.

I do not know the status of staff grievances.

There were three unusual situations that arose which are not covered in the Redbook. The first was from a person who had initiated a grievance and asked if the ombudsman could once again try to settle the disagreement after the process was started. I checked with Melissa Laning who indicated the grievance process was in place and continued. Another issue that came up on two occasions was the request that the ombudsman be a witness in a grievance hearing. Based on the fact that the ombudsman is a neutral person in these disputes coupled with the confidentiality factor, I declined to participate. The third was when I was approached by a group of faculty who had a common problem. I was not able to make progress on the issue and the group asked if a group could file a grievance. Once again, I talked with Professor Laning and we concluded that individual filings should be done as there is no process in place for a group or class action filing.

For this short tenure as the UofL Ombudsman, it has been rewarding in many ways as several solutions to problems were achieved; but, stressful in other ways as being a referee can have its moments. Regardless, I willingly hand the position over to the new UofL Ombudsman, Diane Tobin. She knows I am available to give her what expertise I have regarding process or confidential continuing encounters.

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Professor