

**OMBUDS ANNUAL REPORT**  
**Academic Year 2018-2019**

The goals of the Ombuds Office is to resolve disputes, discuss and mediate concerns and help participants create options and develop action plans to implement in order to create a healthy, happy, effective, productive, efficient and competent workplace . The Ombuds Office works to help design a place where people want to come to work, where they trust their leaders, colleagues, direct reports, and university administration; a place that is not stressful or anxiety producing. Everyone should feel valued and be paid fairly. Diversity should be respected and inclusion encouraged. All of these important workplace values are discussed and encouraged. The Ombuds Office follows four tenets:

Neutrality   Informality   Independence   Confidentiality

These help employees resolve conflicts in a non-threatening and unbiased atmosphere and gives each participant new insights and tools to make their workplace the best it can be for the present and the future.

Between July, 2018-July, 2019 the Ombuds Office saw 122 faculty, administration and staff members. The majority of people were from the Belknap Campus with roughly 30 participants from the Health Sciences Campus (HSC). Eleven of the thirteen schools and colleges were represented and over the course of the year seven trends emerged (School of Public Health and Information and School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies were not represented). They are the following and are ranked in order of most represented to least:

- I.       Communication Issues:
  - a.   Poor skills-
    - i.   Active listening
    - ii.   Appropriate wording
    - iii.   Controlling emotions while speaking
    - iv.   Understanding barriers
    - v.   Recognizing different perspectives, cultures, genders
    - vi.   Willingness to encourage communication even in difficult situations
  - b.   Work style differences—example of introvert and extrovert
- II.       Budgetary Issues
  - a.   Lack of raises
  - b.   Dwindling resources for teaching and/or research
  - c.   Lack of professional opportunities-example of staff member who is a coordinator but does far more than that and wants to stay in department. No slots for advancement.
- III.      Hierarchical/Power Issues
  - a.   Power discrepancies between senior-junior faculty, faculty-staff, supervisor-staff, administration-faculty and staff, and all configurations of these groups oftentimes create inappropriate and rude behaviors
  - b.   Fear of retaliation for expressing concerns and conflicts
  - c.   Gender and other diversity situations Bullying
- IV.      Policy and Procedure Issues:
  - a.   Lack of knowledge

- b. No or little orientation or explanation of policies and procedures for new hires
- c. Lack of consistency (especially in some evaluation procedures)
- V. Poorly trained supervisors
  - a. Training needed over a long period of time (perhaps first year in supervisory role)-many people are promoted to supervisor and go from colleague to boss. Without training on how to transition from colleague to supervisor, the department can become chaotic and may lose valuable workers. This is particularly true for annual evaluations.
  - b. Need accountability for supervisors/managers/leaders
- VI. Toxic Work Environment
  - a. Civility an issue
  - b. Negative, discounting and/or aggressive interactions
- VII. Lack of Positive Recognition
  - a. Encouragement of professional development and advancement
  - b. Recognition within department
  - c. Receiving input from all faculty & staff on ways to show appreciation for excellent work
  - d. Lack of money to hire and retain talented new staff/faculty

All of these concerns and issues, if not addressed, create more severe conflicts. Every one of the above concerns are addressed in the new strategic plan. It is my opinion since these particular issues have surfaced continually, that they be prioritized in the plan in order to be resolved within the next two years.