**FACULTY OMBUDS FACT SHEET**

***Relationships Involved as Codified in Organizational Charter***

An Ombuds Office at a College or University would receive and look into concerns from faculty members, in particular, about their relationships with other faculty members, including Chairs, and possibly others in the administrative hierarchy and support staff as well. The precise scope of the office would be codified in an organizational charter (approved by senior management) that would articulate the principles of the ombuds function and their consistency with International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice.

***IOA Standards of Practice***

1. Independence. The Ombudsperson would hold no other position within the University, be independent of other entities, exercise sole discretion over the cases considered, have access to all information and individuals pertaining to those cases, and exercise sole responsibility for the selection of ombuds staff and over the operations of the office.
2. Neutrality and Impartiality. The Ombuds Office is an impartial and unaligned entity within the University. It strives for fairness and objectivity in its treatment of people and consideration of issues. It reports directly to the University President. It is not affiliated with any compliance function within the University. The Office considers the legitimate interests of all parties affected by the matter under consideration, and develops a range of responsible options for the resolution of issues and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.
3. Confidentiality. All communications are to remain in the strictest confidence. No identities are to be revealed; nor is information to be revealed that could lead to the identification of anyone without the individual’s express permission. Communications with the Ombudsperson is privileged, and the Ombudsperson is not to testify in any formal proceedings. Notes kept on particular cases are to be destroyed after the cases have been resolved.
4. Informality. The Ombudsperson makes no binding decisions and does not mandate policies. The activities of the Ombuds Office are strictly off the record, and is restricted to listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and participating if deemed necessary in third-party intervention. The main mission of the Ombuds Office is to facilitate a process in which the parties develop ways to solve problems themselves. The Office also has as a central mission to bring to light broader systemic trends, issues, concerns, and problems, and thus play a constructive role in organizational development. The Ombuds Office supplements and does not replace formal adjudicative or investigative procedures that the University has in place. One of the positive by-products of an effective Ombuds Office is that it can help obviate the need for formal grievance actions or litigation.

***Faculty Ombuds Offices at Catholic Universities***

1. De Paul University
2. Georgetown University
3. Villanova University
4. University of San Diego

In addition, faculty ombuds offices have been established at a number of private (e.g. Columbia, Princeton) and public universities (e.g. University of Texas—Austin).

***Structuring of the Ombuds Office and the Recruitment of an Ombudsperson***

1. Structuring Issue. To be determined is whether the position of Ombudsperson is to be full-time or part-time. This would depend mainly on the anticipated and actual caseload. In the case of a part-time position, the Ombudsperson would be compensated on the basis of billable hours. Also to be considered is the need for support staff for the Ombudsperson.
2. Recruitment Issue. There are two distinct approaches to the recruitment of an Ombudsperson. The first is to recruit someone with no prior ties to the University, the rationale being that such a person could approach cases and the individuals involved with fresh eyes. The other approach is to recruit someone with an intimate knowledge of the University’s organizational culture and history. A professor emeritus would be a sensible choice if this path were taken.

***Reference***

[www.ombudsassociation.org](http://www.ombudsassociation.org)

Prepared by:

Anthony L. Haynor, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Sociology

haynoran@shu.edu