



Role of the Faculty Ombudsperson

The University of Memphis Faculty Ombudsperson, effective October 10, 2014, is Associate Professor Gloria F. Carr, School of Nursing.

For an appointment, call Prof. Carr's cell phone number: (901) 283.0532 or email her at gcarr@memphis.edu. Please do not include confidential information when requesting an appointment by email.

I. ROLE:

The University of Memphis Faculty Ombudsperson is an independent, confidential, impartial (neutral), and informal resource, chosen from the UM faculty, who is available to all members of the University faculty, including all tenured, tenure-track, clinical, research, and one-year instructors, to facilitate dispute resolution through cooperation, consensus, education and mediation.

The major function of the Ombudsperson is to provide confidential and informal assistance to faculty of the institution. Serving as an independent, impartial neutral, resource, the Ombudsperson is neither an advocate, attorney, nor officer of formal notice, for any individual nor the University, but rather, serves as an advocate for fairness, equity, and compliance with policies and due process. The Ombudsperson acts as a source of information and referral, aids in answering questions, and assists in the resolution of concerns and critical situations. More specifically, the Ombudsperson engenders awareness and skill development in the areas of conflict resolution, communication, team building and civility.

Ombudsperson's activities assist the faculty to resolve complaints that have not risen to the level of formal grievances, with the goal of promoting alternatives to adversarial processes. The office supplements, but does not replace, the university's existing resources for conflict resolution. Staff and student conflicts should be directed to the Department of Human Resources and the Division of Student Affairs respectively.

The Ombudsperson maintains collaborative relationships with other University offices (e.g., Academic Affairs, Human Resources, Affirmative Action, Student Affairs) in the conduct of her/his functions.

The Ombudsperson may NOT disclose specific identifying confidential information that does not involve a significant risk of physical harm, without the consent of the faculty member communicating with the Ombudsperson.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Dispute Resolution/Consultation and Referral

Provide impartial and confidential consultation to members of the college/university faculty community who are aggrieved or concerned about an Issue

Remain independent, neutral and impartial, and exercise good judgment

Assist inquirers in interpreting college/university policies and procedures, seeking input from appropriate offices when needed

Provide assistance to inquirers by clarifying issues and generating options for resolution

Facilitate the inquirer's assessment of the pros and cons of possible options

If direct action by the ombudsperson may be an appropriate option, obtain the inquirer's agreement and permission before proceeding

If necessary, and while maintaining confidentiality, conduct appropriate informal fact-finding in order to better understand an issue from all perspectives

Consult with faculty to develop cooperative strategies for complaint resolution

With the inquirer's permission, consult with all parties to clarify and analyze problems, focus discussions, and develop a mutually-satisfactory process for resolution

When appropriate, facilitate group meetings, use shuttle diplomacy, or negotiation skills to facilitate communication among parties in conflict.

When legal and/or disciplinary issues arise, the Ombudsperson refers the case to the appropriate unit of the University.

B. Policy Analysis and Feedback

Serve as a campus resource for officials in formulating or modifying policy and procedures, raising issues that may surface as a result of a gap between the stated goals of the institution and actual practice

Based on anonymous aggregate data, prepare an annual report to the Faculty Senate, Provost and President that discusses trends in the reporting of grievances and concerns, identifies patterns or problem areas in university/college policies and practices, and recommends revisions and improvements, where appropriate.

Act as a liaison between individuals or groups and the campus administrative structure, serving as a communicator or informal facilitator, as appropriate

Function as a sensor within the campus community to identify problems or trends that affect the faculty.

Provide early warning of new areas of organizational concern, upward feedback, critical analysis of systemic need for improvement, and recommendations of systemic changes

C. Community Outreach and Education

The Ombudsperson is responsible for on-going education and communication about the office's role to all potential inquirers as well as to university leadership

III. SELECTION

The Faculty Ombudsperson has been chosen by a 6 person selection committee composed of three members appointed by the Faculty Senate and three members appointed by the President. The Committee's nominee was subject to the approval of the Faculty Senate and the President.

IV. REPORTING

The Ombudsperson prepares an annual report, based on anonymous aggregate data, to the Faculty Senate, Provost and President that discusses trends in the reporting of grievances and concerns, identifies patterns or problem areas in university/college policies and practices, and recommends revisions and improvements, where appropriate.