

Guidelines for Ombudsperson

Characteristics and Role

The ombudsperson is a person capable of mediating in a dispute without taking sides but with an interest in resolving an issue to the advantage of the College community. Calm, reasoned sincerity should govern the ombudsperson's efforts, with the ability to listen carefully without interruption or the imposition of personal bias. The primary role of the ombudsperson in the Due Process Procedure is to set up and conduct an informal conciliation conference in an attempt to negotiate resolution of a conflict. A secondary role is to coordinate the formation of a Hearing Committee if a formal hearing is necessary.

Selection

The President/Superintendent (or designee) appoints the ombudsperson. The ombudsperson may be a representative of the Superintendent/President, of the Faculty Senate, of the faculty, of the classified staff, of the students, or an outside person such as an attorney or a representative from an outside organization.

Role

Once appointed, the ombudsperson has the following duties and responsibilities.

1. Obtain from complainant written statement outlining charges.
2. Provide copies of charges and Academic Due Process Procedure packet to the other party to the dispute.

3. Review steps of Academic Due Process Procedures with involved parties.

4. Conduct informal conciliation conference(s).

5. Prepare written statement after informal conciliation.

6. Destroy all records of informal conciliation conference.

7. Coordinate formation of Hearing Committee.

Informal Conciliation Conference

During the informal conciliation conference, the ombudsperson serves as gatekeeper, facilitator, and mediator. The ombudsperson follows the guidelines below to facilitate communication between the parties to the dispute.

1. Have parties face each other.
2. Keep parties on track and avoid introduction of ancillary issues.
3. Keep length of conference to one hour unless progress is being made.
4. Allow each party to speak without interruption.
5. Take notes only as reference and destroy all notes at end of conference.

Structure and Process of Informal Conciliation Conference

The ombudsperson opens the conference with a review of the purpose of the conference and review of the guidelines.

The ombudsperson then allows the parties to present their statements. It is helpful to allow each party free rein and intervene only when necessary to reinforce the rules/guidelines. The ombudsperson serves to facilitate resolution of the dispute by encouraging the parties to reach a mutually agreed upon compromise. The ombudsperson will continue the conference as long as progress is being made. If an agreement is reached, the ombudsperson has both parties sign a written agreement stating that the complaint has been successfully resolved.

After the session, the ombudsperson prepares a written report of the results of the conference and submits it to the Superintendent/President (or designee). All notes are then destroyed.

If no resolution is reached, the ombudsperson informs both parties of the next step in the Due Process Procedure. The ombudsperson then begins the process of coordinating the formation of the Hearing Committee. (See information on Formal Hearing in Academic Due Process Procedure.) Once the hearing committee is formed, the person's role as the ombudsperson is finished.