



ANNUAL REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 2010-11



THE UNIVERSITY
of
WISCONSIN
MADISON

Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff

Annual Report for Academic Year 2010-2011

THE VISITORS

Demographic Characteristics

- 67 total number of Visitors
- 66% academic staff; 14% faculty (8 tenured, 1 non-tenured); 13% classified staff; 4% student employees, 3% non-university community members
- 11% targeted minority status
- 73 % female
- 73% employed at UW-Madison for more than 5 years

Their General Concerns

- 113 total number of issues presented
- 52% reported concern with evaluative and supervisory relationships
- 26% reported conflicts with peers or colleagues
- 13% reported lack of respect or improper treatment from colleagues
- 4% reported being bullied
- 18 % reported concerns with employee compensation and benefits
- 25% reported concerns about career progression
- 12% reported problems with organizational matters and leadership

Examples of Specific Issues

- performance appraisal and supervisory feedback
- renegotiating roles and relationships following promotion of a peer to a supervisory position
- co-worker or supervisory conflict involving incivility, disrespect, or bullying
- negotiation of parental or other leave requests
- position security or ambiguity
- potential termination or non-renewal
- receiving appropriate medical insurance /sick leave hours
- accuracy and timeliness of communication about benefits
- lack of clarity and regularity in procedures for performance reviews
- lack of support for persons with chronic illnesses

Duration of Cases

- 2.18 hours on average per Visitor
- Duration ranged from one telephone conversation to multiple interviews with one or more individuals over several months

Ombuds' Actions with Visitors

- 76% assistance with clarifying issues
- 50% generation of alternative approaches to solve identified problems
- 3% with the agreement of the Visitor, we contacted the visitor's supervisor for information
- 27% sought information or assistance for our Visitor from other people within the University
- 6% arranged meetings among the visitor and University staff in a position to help
- 7% acted as intermediaries in informal mediation. We sometimes accompanied the Visitor to these arranged meetings.

THE OMBUDS

Outreach Activities

- consultations with individuals directly related to specific visitors
- Ombuds' brochure translated into Spanish, Hmong, and Tibetan
- visits with campus leaders and units to prompt referral of Visitors—School of Education chairs, directors, and department administrations; CALS human resources staff, department administrators, and faculty; Letters and Science human resources staff; University Health Service human resources staff, Financial Aid staff; Office of Admissions staff; Office of the Registrar staff, Theater and Drama faculty, DOIT human resources staff; Academic personnel staff, Classified Personnel staff, Facilities and Maintenance human resources staff; Union representatives
- participation at campus events to publicize Ombuds' services, e.g., Diversity Forum, Benefits Fair, Women Faculty Mentoring Program Reception, Academic Staff Assembly, New Chairs and Director's Orientation; OVPDC Retreat; Safety conference; SOAR; Academic Staff Leadership Institute (Ralston presentation on performance reviews)
- liaison to Human Resources Working Group, Bascom working group, OVPDC, Medical and Pharmacy Schools ombuds
- attendance at and participation in campus and national and international events for professional development of Ombuds staff

Observed Problematic Trends On Campus

- lowering of morale because of budget restraints and reorganization
- heightened insecurity regarding positions
- performance evaluation policies and procedures for academic staff
- civility among faculty, academic and classified staff
- unclear reporting lines in joint or dual appointments
- impacts of ineffective human resource management by inexperienced or untrained supervisors on vulnerable staff
- timely communication to staff being affected by supervisory, location, and procedural changes in the unit, e.g., crisis management, fiscal concerns.

Future Directions For Ombuds Office

- provide Ombuds' input to OVPDC framework for inclusive excellence
- continue to address UW workplace climate problems
- reach out to Classified Staff and underserved communities of workers, e.g., language and cultural minorities, late-shift workers
- continue to build a constituency of campus partners to support Ombuds' services
- identify and disseminate "Best Practices" for achieving workplace equity and improving workplace climate
- optimize opportunities for professional development of Ombuds staff
- provide leadership to Midwest community of ombuds

Accountability of Ombuds Office

- The confidential nature of the service provided by Ombuds precludes an outcome assessment by visitors or third parties. Thus, we gauge our effectiveness through such indices as the timeliness of making initial contacts with Visitors, the number and range of interventions provided to visitors, and unsolicited feedback from Visitors and other Ombuds and HR providers. Quality assurance is maintained through weekly staffing meetings in which all on-going cases are discussed in detail. In addition to visitor-centered activities, impact on the campus community can be observed in our modeling of effective communication and problem-solving strategies with others in the Visitors' work environments. Finally, we attempt to generalize what we learn in working with specific individuals to the larger campus community.