

***2008-2009 Annual Report  
of the Iowa State University  
Ombuds Office***

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### ***The Ombuds Office at Iowa State University***

The Iowa State University Ombuds Office serves as a confidential and informal resource that assists Faculty, Professional and Scientific staff, Confidential and Supervisory employees, and Graduate and Professional students with concerns or conflicts that arise on campus or at their worksite. The University's Ombuds Officer, who reports to the President's office, is neither an investigator nor a decision-maker. Instead the Ombuds Officer is independent, and she serves as a neutral party who can help people involved in a dispute respectfully discuss their concerns and work together to reach an appropriate and mutually acceptable solution. She also can help individuals navigate through University policies, procedures, or organizational structures with an eye towards opening lines of communication that seem to be closed.

### ***Office Staff and Management***

The Ombuds Office is presently staffed by Elaine Newell in a .6 F.T.E. position. She is on campus three days a week during normal business hours. On occasion the Ombuds Officer is on campus on additional days to meet individuals with difficult schedules or to do an outreach presentation to a group.

The Ombuds Office is located in 69 Physics Hall, which is a comfortable and confidential environment for visitors to discuss their concerns. The location includes both a work area and small conference room for meeting visitors. New policies are being developed to define the purpose and scope of the Ombuds Office, and a procedure manual for the office also is in development that will provide a detailed description of how the office operates.

There is no support staff assigned to the Ombuds Office, so voice mail and computer applications are used to assist in basic administrative functions like scheduling, etc. It appears that office visitors continue to feel comfortable leaving voice mails or emails when the Ombuds Officer is not available to speak to them personally. On a related note, visitors consistently ask the Ombuds Officer to return calls to the visitors' personal cell phones rather than to a University office phone. This reinforces the notion that confidentiality of communication is a critical component of Ombuds Office service.

### ***Data Collection at the Ombuds Office***

Type of Data reported. One goal of this annual report is to review the overall activity of the Ombuds Office, while at the same time maintaining the confidentiality of the visitors to the office and the issues they presented. Therefore, this report first provides data about the **type of visitors** who sought assistance from the Ombuds Office, specifically addressing the groups the Ombuds Office is designed to serve: Faculty, Professional and Scientific staff, Supervisory and Confidential staff, and Graduate and Professional students.

The second type of data presented in this report addresses the **number and status of cases and variety of issues** the visitors to the office discussed. In order to track the frequency of issues that are presented by visitors to the office, the Ombuds Officer has developed a set a "Complaint Codes." Each case will involve at least one and sometimes multiple complaint

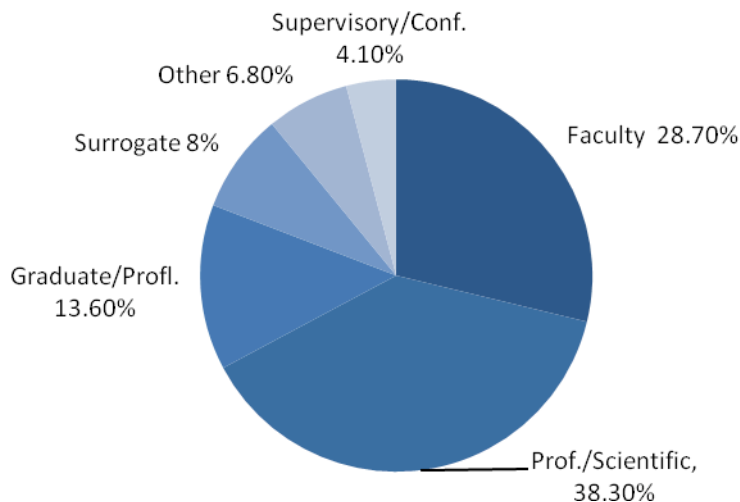
codes, depending on the situation. These codes are general in nature, but still allow for service-group-specific issues, such as “Conflict with major professor” or “Promotion and Tenure.” For reference purposes, a list of the Complaint Codes is attached to the end of this report. (For ease of reading, in the data presented below visitors’ issues are described by using general terms rather than their alphanumeric complaint codes.)

Scope of Data Reported. It is important to keep in mind that although this document is entitled an “Annual Report,” the data presented here only encompasses Ombuds Office activity from September 12, 2008 until May 31, 2009. These dates correspond to the starting date of the present Ombuds Officer until preparation of this report. Thus this Annual Report reflects just over eight months of Ombuds Office activity.

***Visitors to the Ombuds Office***

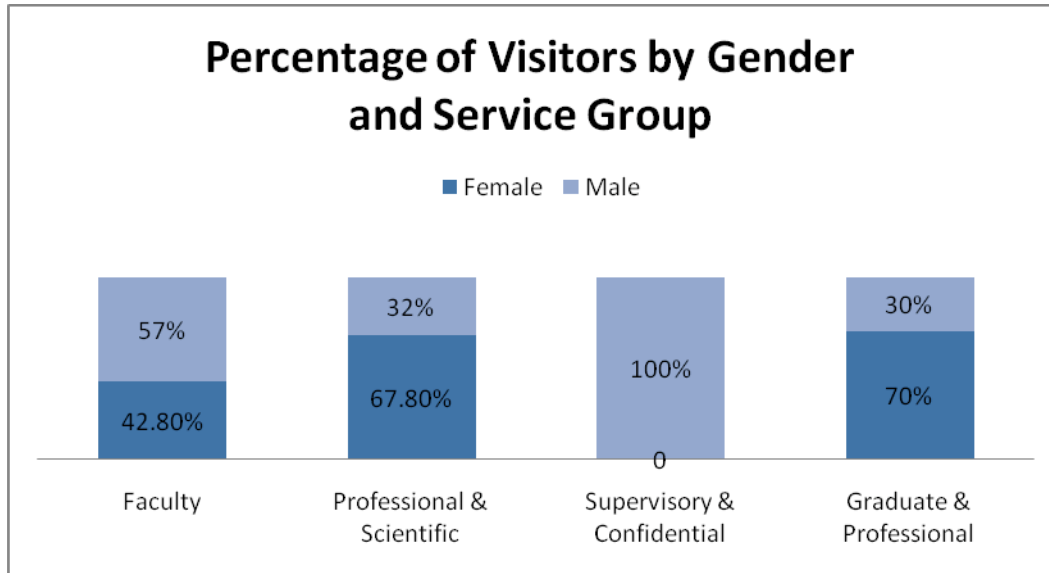
A review of the visitors to the Ombuds Office between September, 2008 and May, 2009 reveals that the majority of visitors to the Ombuds Office were Professional and Scientific staff, followed by Faculty, Graduate or Professional students, and just a few visits by Supervisory and Confidential staff. The specific service group breakdown is noted in below, while a breakdown by gender and service group is found in the exhibit on the following page.

**Ombuds Office Visitors by Service Group**



NOTE: In the preceding graphic, “Other” refers to visitors who requested service but did not belong to one of the four service groups (such as undergraduates). “Surrogate” refers to a visitor who did not have any problem of his or her own but instead approached the Ombuds Office on behalf of someone else.

When reviewing Ombuds Office visits by gender and service group, the following graphic illustrates that no clear patterns have emerged thus far:



When visits from “surrogate” and “other” visitors are included in the data, 42% of all visitors to the Ombuds Office were male and 57% were female.

Finally, with regard to the preferred method for initially contacting the Ombuds Office, the data shows that visitors’ method of initial contact with the Ombuds Office is as follows:

|            |       |
|------------|-------|
| Telephone: | 53.4% |
| Email:     | 34.2% |
| Walk in:   | 12.3% |

***Number of Cases, Case Status, and Issues Presented***

Number of Cases/Case Status. Between September 12, 2008 and May 31, 2009, the Ombuds Officer opened 73 cases and closed 51 cases. As of June 5, 2009, there are 11 cases that are open and active and 11 cases that are open and inactive. A case is considered “inactive” when the Ombuds Officer is not actively working on it and no meetings are scheduled. For example, the visitor may be considering his or her options, or attempting recommended self-help. Generally if a case has been inactive for 30 days, the Ombuds Officer will make a follow-up contact with the visitor to determine if additional assistance is needed or wanted. If no further assistance is requested, or if the visitor does not respond to these follow-up efforts, then the case is closed.

Issues Presented by Visitors. The majority of cases involved only one issue, but about 28.7% of all cases involved two issues. When considering all cases, the predominant issues presented by visitors to the Ombuds Office were as follows (in order of popularity):

- Conflict with supervisor (26% of all cases included this issue)
- Interpretation or implementation of policy (12%)
- Financial issues (11%)
- Employment duties (9.5%)
- Disciplinary action (5%)
- Conflict with major professor (5% of all cases, *but 40% of all grad./prof. student cases*)

Not surprisingly, conflict with either a supervisor or a major professor was the top issue in each service group except for Supervisory and Confidential staff. (Only three visitors from that group came to the Ombuds Office, and each of those individuals presented a different issue.)

### ***The Ombuds Office and Diversity-related Service***

At this point, the Ombuds Office is not collecting any documentation in which visitors may voluntarily report their minority status. However 11.8% of all visitors to the Ombuds Office were observed to be a person of color. Diversity was almost never the main issue in Ombuds Office cases, however:

- Three Faculty cases (out of 21 total cases) included a diversity-related component.
- Three Professional and Scientific staff cases (out of 28 total cases) included a diversity-related component.
- Two Graduate & Professional student cases (out of 10 total cases) included a diversity-related component.
- One Supervisory & Confidential staff case (out of 3 total cases) included a diversity-related component.

“Diversity-related component” means that the visitor believed that diversity may have played a part in the concern or conflict at hand.

### ***Mediation and Meeting Facilitation***

Normally the Ombuds Officer meets one-on-one with a single individual to discuss a situation. However visitors have started to ask the Ombuds Officer to either mediate a dispute with another individual or facilitate a meeting of several people where difficult topics needed to be discussed. Since January, 2009, ten such multi-person meetings have occurred. It is anticipated that requests for this service may increase as more people become aware of the value of such a meeting.

### ***Office Outreach and Education***

A great deal of time was invested during the fall in outreach and education about the Ombuds Office at Iowa State University. Favorable articles appeared in the Ames Tribune and Inside

Iowa State. The office was also mentioned in “The Ombuds Blog” and the Journal of the International Ombuds Association. Since September, 2008, the Ombuds Officer has made presentations or had individual meetings about the Ombuds Office services with 30 groups or individuals. A “Welcome to the Ombuds Office” document has been created and is provided to each visitor to the Ombuds Office. This document is also provided to new employees when they start work at the University. Anecdotally it appears that there is some correlation between Ombuds Office outreach or local publicity and the volume of visitors to the office.

A new package of promotional publications for the Ombuds Office has been designed and produced and is currently in use. It includes a 4 x 6 inch information card, a smaller “web card” (similar to a business card for the office itself), and a bookmark. These pieces were specifically designed to provide cost-effective, useful information about the Ombuds Office for a variety of audiences , while still fulfilling the University’s commitment to sustainability.

### ***Professional Development***

The Ombuds Officer applied for and was accepted as a member of the International Ombuds Association, the main professional organization that provides access to training and information about the ombuds profession as well as contact information for other colleagues in the field. The Ombuds Officer attends quarterly meetings of an informal gathering of ombuds personnel from other government agencies in Iowa. She has also taken a class on campus to learn how to use Microsoft Access database software. This will enable her to design a searchable database for use in the ombuds office that maintains visitor confidentiality while still tracking any general trends that may arise in types of issues, etc.

### ***Ombuds Advisory Committee***

The Ombuds Advisory Committee was formed to serve as a resource for the Ombuds Officer when difficult questions or issues arise that require a broad range of University expertise. Currently sitting on the Advisory Committee are Executive Assistant to the President Tahira Hira, Associate Provost Susan Carlson, Associate Vice President for Human Resources Carla Espinoza, University Counsel Paul Tanaka; Associate University Counsel Kathryn Overberg, Assistant Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Francesca Gallaraga, and Manager of Employee Relations Kristi Darr. Thus far the Advisory Committee and Ombuds Officer have met twice to discuss a variety of issues related to effective operation of the Ombuds Office. During these meetings, issues are discussed in general terms and visitor confidentiality is strictly maintained.

### ***Analysis and Conclusions***

Much has been accomplished these eight months, primarily through service on 73 cases and 30 outreach and education contacts. Staffing the office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays has turned out to be somewhat less useful than anticipated, as a fair number of campus committees and organizations only meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and office outreach could be increased on those days. Therefore, beginning on July 1, 2009, the Ombuds Office will be

staffed on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays (instead of Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays).

The current set of office hours for walk-in visitors has also not been as useful as originally hoped. Originally it was thought that office hours from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays would accommodate walk-in visitors who could only come during their lunch hour. This six hours of availability was heavily promoted in every outreach presentation, and on the Ombuds Office voice mail greeting. However, over the course of eight months very few visitors 'walked in' during office hours. Since 88% of Ombuds Office visitors call or email for an appointment prior to their visit, open office hours will now take place only on Wednesdays from noon until 1:00. This change is intended to provide support for walk-in visitors and open up additional time for scheduled appointments.

Finally, many visitors to the Ombuds Office have expressed positive comments about having such a resource available to listen to their concerns and try to help them resolve their conflicts. In the coming year the Ombuds Office would like to increase the amount of outreach and education provided across the campus, as well as develop an expanded and enhanced Ombuds Office website that includes more information about self-help resources. It is encouraging to have the University's support in providing the current level of service, and it is exciting to recognize there is plenty of room to develop the Ombuds Office into an even better resource for the Iowa State University community.

## Complaint Codes for Contact Form and Database

### Faculty (F)

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| F1  | Conflict w/supervisor (includes job performance, <i>but see</i> code F9 and use that when appropriate) |
| F2  | Conflict w/colleague (including research credit, etc.)   |
| F3  | Conflict w/subordinate   |
| F4  | Employment duties (including teaching or committee assignments, etc.)                                  |
| F5  | Financial issues (including compensation, reimbursement, benefits, etc.)                               |
| F6  | Disciplinary action (includes actual threat/implementation of disciplinary action)                     |
| F7  | Interpretation/implementation of policy  |
| F8  | Concern re: physical environment (i.e., work conditions, not personal violence)                        |
| F9  | Promotion & tenure; non renewal of contract  |
| F00 | Other  |
| FDR | Diversity related (includes adverse treatment related to group membership)                             |

### Professional and Scientific employees (PS)

|      |   |
|------|---|
| PS1  | Conflict w/supervisor (includes job performance issues)   |
| PS2  | Conflict w/colleague  |
| PS3  | Conflict w/subordinate  |
| PS4  | Employment duties (including position classification)   |
| PS5  | Financial issues (including compensation, reimbursement, benefits, etc.)                            |
| PS6  | Disciplinary action (includes actual threat/implementation of disciplinary action or formal review) |
| PS7  | Interpretation/implementation of policy   |
| PS8  | Concern re: physical environment (i.e., work conditions, not personal violence)                     |
| PS00 | Other   |
| PSDR | Diversity related (includes adverse treatment related to group membership)                          |

### Supervisory & Confidential employees (SC)

|      |   |
|------|---|
| SC1  | Conflict w/supervisor (includes job performance issues)   |
| SC2  | Conflict w/colleague  |
| SC3  | Conflict w/subordinate  |
| SC4  | Employment duties (including position classification)   |
| SC5  | Financial issues (including compensation, reimbursement, benefits, etc.)                            |
| SC6  | Disciplinary action (includes actual threat/implementation of disciplinary action or formal review) |
| SC7  | Interpretation/implementation of policy   |
| SC8  | Concern re: physical environment (i.e., work conditions, not personal violence)                     |
| SC00 | Other   |
| SCDR | Diversity related (includes adverse treatment related to group membership)                          |

### Graduate & Professional students (GPS)

|      |   |
|------|---|
| GP1  | Conflict w/ major professor (academic or employment)                            |
| GP2  | Conflict w/colleague  |
| GP3  | Conflict w/staff, etc.  |
| GP4  | Employment-related conflict, not involving major professor                      |
| GP5  | Financial issues (including tuition, financial aid, fees & costs)               |
| GP6  | Disciplinary action (related to academics or employment)                        |
| GP7  | Interpretation/implementation of policy   |
| GP8  | Concern re: physical environment (i.e., work conditions, not personal violence) |
| GP00 | Other   |
| GPDR | Diversity related (includes adverse treatment related to group membership)      |