University of Washington
Office of the Ombud
2013 Annual Report

*No trees were harmed in the production of this report.

Photo credits on last page.
In July, I was appointed by President Young to be the University Ombud. As a UW alum, I was honored to be selected for this important role. It has been a real pleasure to return to the university.

The University of Washington benefits from having immensely intelligent people who, through a combination of passion and collaboration, are constantly improving the university. The Ombud’s Office has a unique role in ensuring that latter piece – “collaboration” – happens and people are able to successfully reach their potential as members of the university community.

As I reflect on 2013, I am very appreciative of the support I received from my predecessor (Susan Neff), my wonderful staff (Jack O’Brien & Emma Williams), and the assistance the Ombud’s Office receives throughout the university every day.

Sincerely,

Chuck Sloane
Our Process

We listen to our client's experience

We ask questions to fully understand the situation, context, and who else is involved

We encourage clients to fully consider both their needs and their goals

We help clients map out the options available to pursue their goals

We consider ways to impartially assist in the situation; e.g. making connections, helping gather information, preparing the client for a conversation, mediation, etc.

Our Goal: We work to ensure clients have a broader understanding of their situation, options, and a more tangible vision of a successful resolution after our work together.
Our Clients

3.7

Average Contacts Per Client

We define a “client” as any individual that we meet and provide a consultation. Depending on the complexity of the situation, we often meet with the same client multiple times.

We may only see people one time – but it is likely to be a “critical time” which can result in the changing of habits or the movement in a situation that has been stuck.

Over the past year, the Ombud's Office worked with 420 separate clients. In the course of our work with those clients, we also initiated 1,538 contacts in-person or by telephone.
Our Staff

Chuck Sloane
*University Ombud*

Emma Williams
*Associate Ombud*

Jack O’Brien
*Assistant to the Ombud*

**Staff Concerns**
- Faculty Concerns
- Trainings
- Outreach
- Mediation

**Student Concerns**
- Staff Concerns
- Mediation
- UW Tacoma

**Basic Questions**
- Intake
- Scheduling
- UW Policies
There are nearly 100k staff, students, and academic personnel on the three campuses, UW Medical Center, and Harborview Medical Center, who can access our services on a given day.

This number does not include the parents, alumni, and community members who may also access our office.
Our Office’s Evolution

"The appointment of an Ombudsman in a university setting is still comparatively rare and largely untried."

President Odegaard wrote the above in a 1968 letter which introduced the first UW Ombudsman. At the time, the Ombud's Office was intended to primarily serve university students.

Over the past forty years, the Ombud's Office has expanded and become a resource for the entire university community: students, faculty, and staff.

We also make ourselves available to “other” members of the broader community; including: parents, alumni, and local businesses, with a relationship to the university.
Did you know?

UW was sixth in the nation to appoint an Ombudsman on a college campus!
Undergraduate Cases

Given the diversity of the cases and issues that we work on, it can be difficult to describe our Office’s work. To provide some context, we have included case examples in this annual report.

Photo courtesy of UW-Tacoma

Michael (not his real name) contacted his Professor when he did not receive a final course grade. He was told that his professor suspected him of cheating and the issue would require an investigation. A quarter later, Michael still had not received a grade and met with the Ombud’s Office to discuss his options. He felt stuck, afraid to further anger the Professor but needing the grade to move forward in his program. Our Office raised the issue with the Professor who worked quickly with the department to finalize his grade.

1 in 3

Freshman report feeling "frequently overwhelmed"

Source: UCLA Higher Education Research Institute
A graduate student named “Joe” (not his real name) was feeling pressured to provide authorship credit to colleagues with no real connection to his dissertation. Joe was worried that raising the issue would jeopardize support for publishing his work and his future employment opportunities.

To ensure his anonymity, our office contacted Joe's department to gather information on their authorship process and policy. We then worked with Joe to establish a plan that allowed him to raise the issue in a productive but safe manner.
## Student Concerns

### Frequent Issues

| Class Issues – access to classes, grades, professor behavior, etc. |
| Administrative – housing, financial aid, transcripts, registration, etc. |
| Social – hostile or negative classes, peers, etc. |

### ...others that we’ve heard

- plagiarism
- housing
- course availability
- disability accommodation
- international/cultural adjustment
- social media
- student insurance
- authorship
- work/school/life balance
Building Relationships

To be successful, the Ombud Office must have productive working relationships throughout the university. In 2013, we used the occasion of a new Ombud to rekindle our Office’s connection to hundreds of stakeholders. These relationships allow the Ombud Office to learn about university trends, available services, and to promote the best possible solutions.

Outreach Efforts

1,848 Miles traveled
100+ Outreach Meetings since July

New Website

1,092 Visitors
11,898 Page Views
Faculty Cases

87

Faculty Served by the Ombud in 2013

Professor Shusky (not her real name) came to our office to discuss retirement. She is hoping to retire in two years but wasn’t comfortable discussing her retirement with colleagues or department leadership until she had a viable plan transition plan.

Over several meetings, we worked with Professor Shusky to develop a plan that addressed her concerns about her legacy, succession options for her department roles, and helped find answers to financial questions associated with the timing of her retirement.

Photo courtesy of UW Admissions
Conciliation

**Wanted:**

A program to successfully address disputes between faculty members or issues arising between faculty members and university administration before those issues require adjudication.

**Found:**

The **Conciliation Program** consists of seven faculty members who serve as third-party “conciliators” for faculty disputes. The conciliators are familiar with the university’s procedures, culture, and possible opportunities for resolution. They work in conjunction with the Ombud's Office to:

> “resolve problems by informal means without resorting to more formal adjudicative proceedings.”

Faculty Code, Section 27-41

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**Faculty Concerns**

**Frequent Issues**

.....others that we’ve heard
### Frequent Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>tenure, benefits, salary, retirement, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>between Chairs, Directors, Faculty, Students, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>research space, scientific integrity, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ....others that we’ve heard

- Office and lab space
- Retirement
- Lecturers and adjunct faculty
- Salary inequity
- Authorship
- Relationship with staff
- Aggressive student behavior
- Lack of mentoring
- Changing leadership
Visitor Changes

Over the past five years, since 2008, the role status of clients seeking Ombud services has changed. The number of Professional Staff on campus has increased over time, which likely accounts for the increase in Professional Staff seeking Ombud services. Similarly, the decline in Classified Staff seeking Ombud services is likely correlated to the smaller number of Classified Staff on campus.
For the past five years, from 2008-2013, there has been a consistent average increase in cases in the months leading up to graduation: February, April, and June. It is also interesting to note that case numbers stay fairly consistent even in the traditionally quieter summer months.
“Melanie” (not her real name) was concerned about staff behavior that could be misinterpreted by students and lead to situations that at the very least appeared improper. However, Melanie wasn’t sure how to raise the issue within her department.

The Ombud Office worked with Melanie to fully articulate her concerns and then facilitated a meeting with an administrator who listened, agreed about the potential for impropriety, and quickly instituted a new staff policy to address the questionable behavior.
### Staff Concerns

#### Frequent Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job security – hiring,</td>
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<tr>
<td>firing, promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>evaluation, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization – policies,</td>
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<tr>
<td>procedures, reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>relationships, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict – issues with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colleagues, faculty,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### ...others that we’ve heard

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<td>communication with supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>performance evaluations</td>
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<tr>
<td>bullying</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizational restructuring</td>
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<tr>
<td>salary inequity</td>
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<tr>
<td>retirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>professional development</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
We are grateful to the hundreds of university community members who came to our offices in 2013. Seeking an outside perspective when faced with a challenge is admirable. We appreciate the opportunity to provide assistance during these critical junctures in a person’s career.

Sincerely,

Chuck, Emma & Jack

The Office of the Ombud
Feedback

In the upcoming year, the Ombud Office is committed to expanding our capacity, relationships, and accessibility, so that we can continue to improve our service to the entire university community.

We invite you to offer your feedback on goals and priorities for the Ombud Office in 2014. Please visit our survey to share your input:

2013 Annual Report Survey

Photos on the cover page courtesy of: UW Admissions, UW Division of Cardiology, Joe Mabel via Wikipedia Commons, UW Tacoma Institute of Technology, UW Department of Medicine.