OFFICE OF THE OMBUD
WELCOME LETTER

“Folks don’t come to us with easy situations”

As I look back on the year, this is one of my biggest takeaways about our office’s role here at the University of Washington. The people we work with have typically accessed some university services already and also spent considerable time thinking about their options, yet they are still searching for the right approach to resolve their situation.

What makes our work possible is that, while each of the 466 cases that we handled in 2014 involved different parties and reasons for complexity, they also involved passionate and intelligent people. That combination of passion + intelligence is the ideal environment for an Ombud Office like ours. Rather than jumping in and directly fixing a person’s problem, we focus on empowering our clients to be purposeful and professional as they resolve their own situations.

On behalf of my outstanding team here at the Ombud Office, we are grateful to the thousands of people that we worked with over the past year. These relationships have helped us resolve individual matters and also work on systemic improvements that will benefit future UW students, staff, and faculty members.

Chuck Sloane, University Ombud
Since the Office of the Ombud was first created by President Odegaard in 1968, we have used a number of different approaches to serve the university. Our current “Solution Focused” process was developed by combining techniques from mediation and clinical psychology with our institutional knowledge.

From top administrators to first-year students, we have found this process helps our clients efficiently develop and work toward their goals. Our process is structured around three questions:

- What happened?
- What would you like to see happen?
- What can you/we do to make that possible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>996</th>
<th>Client Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,736</td>
<td>Outreach contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,000+</td>
<td>Miles traveled</td>
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WHO WE SERVE

15% Undergraduates
19% Graduates
26% Academic Personnel
34% Staff

Here are a few interesting facts about who we worked with in 2014:

- 466 cases, which represents an 11% increase from our case total in 2013.
- 30% increase in Academic personnel.
- 29% increase in Graduate students.
- 24% increase in cases at Tacoma where we established a weekly presence beginning in 2014.
- 45% have been with the University more than 5 years.
CONCERNS WE’VE HEARD

- 20% Job security/Student Status
- 18% Evaluative Relationships
- 14% Career Progression
- 9% Colleague Relationships
- 8% Discrimination/Harassment
- 4% Policy and Ethics
- 4% Organizational/Mission

We also heard the following issues:

- Safety & Health
- Administrative Issues
- Compensation & Benefits
AFTER MEETING WITH OUR OFFICE…

72
Percent of our clients felt more optimistic about their situation.

68
Percent of our clients felt more in-control of their future.

63
Percent of our clients felt more aware of the resources and support available to them.
OUR TEAM

Chuck applies his background in clinical psychology, human resources, and mediation to help resolve issues throughout the university. Chuck focuses largely on faculty and staff concerns, building relationships throughout the university, and providing overall direction for our office.

Emma has extensive experience in mediation and higher education. Emma works closely with undergraduate and graduate students, examines policies, conducts outreach, and provides a weekly presence for our office at UW Tacoma.

Jane has experience working in several university offices and brings a wealth of UW knowledge and an unbridled love of learning to her work. Jane manages intake, research, and scheduling for our office.
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

An undergraduate student named “Josh” came in after he had disagreed with his professor during a class discussion. He said that she had seemed very upset and asked him to “please relax.” Josh was worried the interaction would hurt his grade in the class and, given the professor’s prominence within the field, could jeopardize his professional future.

We helped Josh look at the interaction from the professor’s perspective. Josh realized that his passion for the subject combined with his nervousness in class might have made his comments seem aggressive. With that in mind Josh met with the professor outside of class to better understand her response. He was able to successfully resolve their miscommunication.

Frequent Concerns
- Professor behavior
- Unclear course expectations
- Grading
- Academic progress
- Major status or expectations
- Barriers to graduation
- Classmate relationships
- Gossip and rumors
A graduate student named “Jessica” came to our office after receiving a long list of concerns about her work as a TA from “Mark”, her advisor. She described how Mark had listed “her countless shortcomings as a TA” causing her to become upset and walk out of their meeting.

Jessica was frustrated that Mark hadn’t told her his concerns earlier. With her consent, we contacted Mark who said that he had wanted to bring it up earlier but was worried that Jessica would become upset rather than listen to his concerns. The Ombud Office facilitated a meeting in which Mark apologized for waiting to have this discussion. They agreed to meet regularly over the quarter to discuss expectations and ensure that Jessica had the support she needed to improve as a TA.
A faculty member named “Amy” was concerned that any issue she raised in department meetings seemed to provoke an argumentative response from the Chair.

Amy worried that these interactions were making her look bad in front of the other meeting attendees and could jeopardize her promotional prospects. While she really wanted to avoid these arguments, Amy also felt strongly about the issues she was raising.

Amy believed that bringing the issue up with the Chair would make it worse. Instead, she worked with our office and developed a plan to reach out to fellow faculty members. In these conversations, Amy gathered strategies to improve interactions with the Chair and asked her colleagues for help raise challenging issues which over time improved the situation.

Frequent Concerns
- Research collaborations
- Difficult student behavior
- Retirement Transitions
- Changing leadership
- Authorship
- Merit pay
- Promotion prospects
- Relationship with staff
- Salary inequity
A university employee named “Brendon” was the only man in his workgroup and increasingly frustrated by his colleagues’ joking comments about men. A recent experience had left him feeling that his supervisor was condoning his coworkers’ behavior.

Brendon had a number of options, from discussing the matter with his supervisor to filing a formal complaint with HR or UCIRO. After considering his goals, he decided to give his supervisor the opportunity to address the matter. We helped Brendon articulate the actions he hoped the supervisor would take so their meeting could be productive.

Soon after, the supervisor also contacted us and we worked with her to create a plan addressing the situation and improving their workgroup.

**Frequent Concerns**
- Professional development
- Job security
- Communications with supervisor
- Work environment
- Difficulties with colleagues
- Management changes
- Retirement

*Annual Report Illustrations by Suzanne Boretz*
THANK-YOU

We are grateful to the hundreds of community members who came to our offices at the Seattle, Bothell, and Tacoma campuses in 2014. Seeking an outside perspective when faced with a challenging situation is admirable. We appreciate the opportunity to provide assistance during these critical junctures in a person’s career.

Sincerely,

Chuck Emma Jan

The Office of the Ombud