

First Annual Report by the CGU Ombuds Office

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CGU OMBUDS OFFICE 2006-07 ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

The CGU Ombuds Office was established in July 2006 with the hiring of Tom Kosakowski as the University Ombudsperson. In his first year, the Ombudsperson has established an office following best practices for organizational ombuds in higher education. In addition and most importantly, the Ombudsperson provided dispute resolution assistance and advice to the CGU community on a wide range of issues.

Mission of the Office

The CGU Ombuds Office is a confidential and informal dispute resolution resource for faculty, staff and students. Using alternative dispute resolution techniques, the Ombudsperson provides options for individuals to safely and effectively discuss and resolve their concerns. Ombuds services include providing information on university policies and procedures, coaching for direct dispute resolution, and mediating conflicts. In addition, the Ombudsperson provides upward feedback to university administrators. At all times, the Ombudsperson practices according to four ethical principles:

Confidentiality – The Ombudsperson does not keep records for the University, and does not disclose the names or concerns of visitors, without permission. (The only exception is if the Ombudsperson believes there is an imminent risk of physical harm.) The Ombuds Office thus is not an office of notice for the University.

Neutrality and Independence – The Ombudsperson is respectfully impartial with all parties to a conflict. The Ombudsperson does not take sides in any dispute, but rather advocates for fair process and equitable results. To ensure objectivity, the Ombudsperson is not aligned with any administrative unit or school, and reports directly to the President for administrative and budgetary purposes.

Informality – The Ombudsperson provides assistance for individuals to resolve conflicts informally. The Ombudsperson does not arbitrate, adjudicate or participate in formal procedures.

First Year Activities

By the start of fall classes in 2006, the CGU Ombuds Office was set up in the McAlister Center, a location that is accessible and separate from the campus. The Ombudsperson created protocols for the office, including a Charter Agreement, which defines the Ombudsperson's role and scope of duties, and written Office Policies and Procedures, which detail day-to-day operations. In addition, a brochure and website were created to promote the service and educate the CGU community. The Ombudsperson supplemented this written information with presentations at new student orientations, and faculty, student government and staff meetings, and in individual meetings.

In the first year of operation, visitors brought 91 unique matters to the Ombuds Office (with 16 from repeat visitors). Visitors included students, staff and faculty of both genders and all ethnicities. From these meetings, the Ombudsperson provided upward feedback to administrators on several occasions regarding systemic and widespread concerns.

Summary of Visitor Statistics

The following data describe only individuals initiating contact with the Ombuds Office. In the course of working with visitors on their concerns, the Ombudsperson had contact with many more individuals and addressed additional ancillary concerns. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding errors or unavailable data. Readers are also cautioned that the data may not be statistically reliable as an overall indicator for CGU due to the small sample size and self-selection characteristics. Therefore, these data should not be interpreted as confirming or refuting more comprehensive campus climate surveys.

<u>Description</u>	<u>Share</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Share</u>
Gender		Season	
Women	69%	Sep-Dec 2006	44%
Men	30%	Jan-May 2007	43%
Ethnicity		Nature of Primary Concern	
White (non-Hisp./Lat.)	60%	Employment/Workplace	36%
Asian / Pac. Is. / Hawaiian	10%	Academic/Pedagogic	13%
Black / African Am.	9%	Policies/Procedures	19%
Hispanic / Latino	8%	Bias/Discrimination	14%
Unknown	12%	Housing	3%
Status		Fines & Fees	2%
Employee	48%	Other/Unknown	12%
Staff	30%		
Administrator	19%		
Student	31%		
Doctoral	16%		
Masters	5%		
Unknown	10%		
Faculty	18%		

A survey of academic ombuds conducted by The Ombudsman Association (TOA) in 2003 provides some context for the CGU data:

- In the TOA study, 83% of academic ombuds said that their offices were established to “fulfill a need identified by key constituents.” Similarly, the CGU Ombuds Office was created in response to gender and equity concerns from the faculty.
- The TOA survey showed that the average caseload of academic ombuds was equal to about 4% of the population per annum. The overall usage rate for the CGU Ombuds Office was approximately 3% of the total population.
- Relative to the results of the TOA study, the CGU Ombuds Office saw a higher percentage of staff (48% vs. 33%) and faculty (18% vs. 14%), and lower percentage of students (31% vs. 44%). However, this may be due to the fact that most other academic ombuds offices serve predominantly undergraduate populations, which have more frequent, but less complex concerns.
- Academic ombuds in the TOA study reported that just 8% of their visitors were concerned about “discrimination or harassment.” Similarly, the CGU Ombuds Office found that visitors were more about workplace issues than bias and discrimination (at least as a primary concern).