

# **The Ombuds Office Annual Report**

**University of Idaho**

July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009

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September 23, 2009

## History

The ombuds function as a method of informal conflict resolution dates back to 1809 when the Swedish legislature created an office to receive complaints relative to government actions. The idea spread to several other nations, then to companies, local governments, international organizations and other public and private entities.

Universities began appointing ombuds (alternatively referred to as ombudsmen or ombudspeople) in the 1960s. According to the International Ombudsman Association, by 1968 there were 20-30 colleges and universities with Ombuds Offices, largely in reaction to campus turmoil associated with the civil rights, free speech and anti-war movements. In most cases, the offices were created on behalf of students more than for faculty or staff.

At the University of Idaho, the Ombuds Office was not created until 1992. At that time, the “Office of Faculty Ombudsman” was created by President Elisabeth A. Zinser and staffed part time by a faculty member. Ironically, it was created to serve faculty only. In 1994, an “interim staff ombudsman” was appointed for a one-year term, and was filled by Carol Hahn. During the following year, 1995, the services of the faculty ombuds were expanded to include cases from staff. As the case load increased, President Hoover approved the addition of a half-time “assistant ombudsman” in 1998. This position was to be filled from staff personnel with Roxanne Schreiber being selected for the job. The ombudsman and assistant ombudsman served both faculty and staff, based solely on availability.

In 2000, the title of “assistant” was changed to “associate” to more accurately reflect the role and responsibilities of the position. This position continues to be held by Roxanne Schreiber who is also the university’s Work/Life Specialist. Those holding the ombudsman position have been:

- David J. Walker, Dept. of Agricultural Economics/Rural Sociology (1992 – 1999)
- Thomas V. Trotter, Dept. of Counseling and School Psychology, Special Education, and Educational Leadership, (1999 – 2003)
- Charles Morrison, Counseling and Testing Center (2003 – 2005)
- James R. Fazio, Dept. of Conservation Social Sciences (2006 – present).

A change to the current name – The Ombuds Office – was adopted by Faculty Senate (formerly Faculty Council) in 2005 to reflect gender-neutrality of the role and office.

### *Changes during the Past Year*

During the past academic year (2008-09), two significant changes were approved by Faculty Senate: (1) the designation of “associate” was eliminated from the job titles and the term “ombuds” replaced the term ombudsman for both positions with one ombuds being from faculty and one from the exempt staff, and (2) service was expanded to include students, making the University of Idaho an institution with a full-service ombuds office within its community.

Also, in an effort to provide timely and enhanced services to other campuses and centers in Idaho, the Ombuds Office added a video consultation option for face-to-face or telephonic communication. By using free public video conferencing utilities, employees and students can now “speak” with an ombuds in much the same way as on-campus visitors. While video conferencing does not fully replace the need for off-campus travel, it will reduce intervention travel expenses and improve distance services.

## **Purpose and Function**

The primary purpose of the Ombuds Office is to resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level in the university’s administrative structure. The office is also intended to prevent problems by being an agent of positive change. These services are accomplished through:

- ◆ listening to concerns and responding to complaints
- ◆ providing information about policies and services
- ◆ coordinating with other offices on campus such as Human Resources, Risk Management, Human Rights Compliance, Work & Life, Disability Support Services, and others
- ◆ analyzing problems and exploring options
- ◆ applying conflict resolution and conciliation methods
- ◆ noting trends and recommending changes in policy and/or work procedures

The Ombuds Office adheres to four Standards of Practice and a code of ethics promulgated by the International Ombudsman Association. Specifically, the standards are:

### ***Independence***

To ensure objectivity, the office operates independent of all university entities and reports to the highest possible level of the organization.

### ***Confidentiality***

All contacts, conversations and information exchanged with the ombuds remain confidential and are not disclosed without the consent of the parties involved and the ombuds. An exception is when disclosure is necessary to protect someone from harm and when otherwise required by law.

### ***Neutrality***

An ombuds does not take sides nor represent nor advocate on behalf of any party or the university. Rather, it is the role of the ombuds to consider the facts, rights, interests, and safety of all parties involved in a search for a fair resolution to a problem. An ombuds advocates only for fairness and justice.

### ***Informality***

Consultations are conducted “off the record” and do not constitute notice to the university in any way. No personal information is retained or used for subsequent formal proceedings. An ombuds will not serve as a witness nor offer testimony in any formal proceeding unless required by law. Although the process is informal, individuals using the services of the Ombuds Office retain their rights to all formal procedures ordinarily available to them.

## The Year in Review

### *Staffing and Case Load*

Over the past year, the Ombuds Office was again fully staffed. This provided service to university employees eight hours a day, five days a week. Each day during the school year was split roughly with Schreiber working mornings and Fazio working afternoons. During summer recess, the office was staffed by Schreiber with Fazio on unpaid 'on call' status as needed. Approximately 44 hours were worked on this voluntary basis. Administrative assistance was provided by Ann Thompson who works jointly for the Faculty Secretary and the Ombuds Office.

Total cases increased by 12 over last year (Figure 1). Student cases were insignificant in number, so the increase can not be attributed to the change in policy that occurred in mid-year allowing the office to accept student cases. Once again, the total number of cases reported is a conservative figure in that it does not account for the numerous informal contacts initiated by individuals outside the office during the course of other business or casual encounters on campus. In assessing workloads or impact, total cases should be considered as only one metric, and not the most important. A 'case' can vary from a single visit to one that is highly complex and involves many visits, numerous contacts and a large quantity of ombuds time.

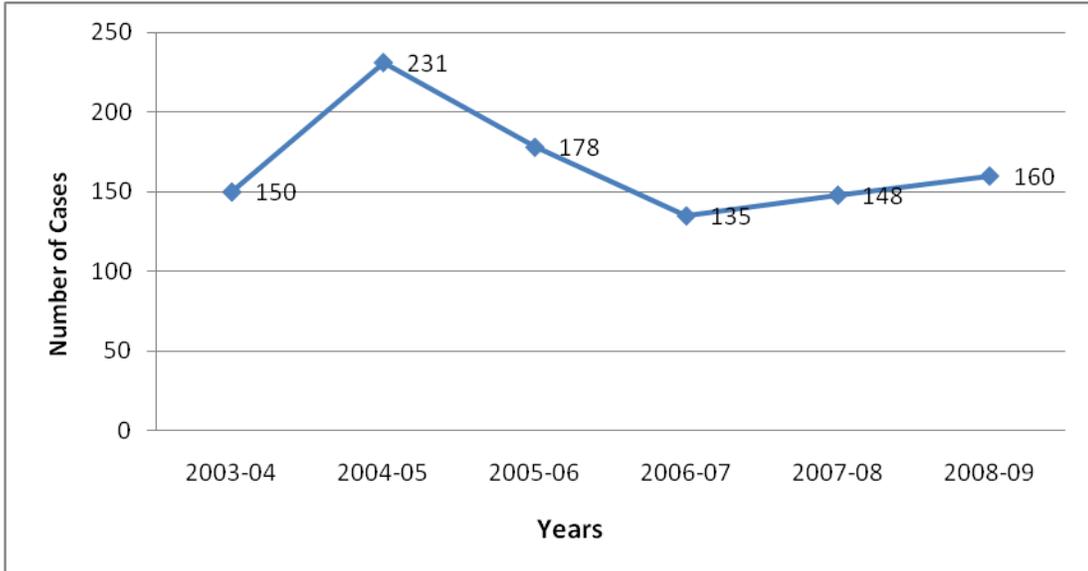
No explainable trends or patterns in cases by month (Figure 2) have been detected over the past several years. April had the highest case load in the past two years, probably reflecting the cycle of evaluations and contract non-renewals. Otherwise, some months were approximately the same as before, some went from low to high, and some vice versa, rendering predictability impossible.

### **Use of the Ombuds Office Compared with Other Institutions**

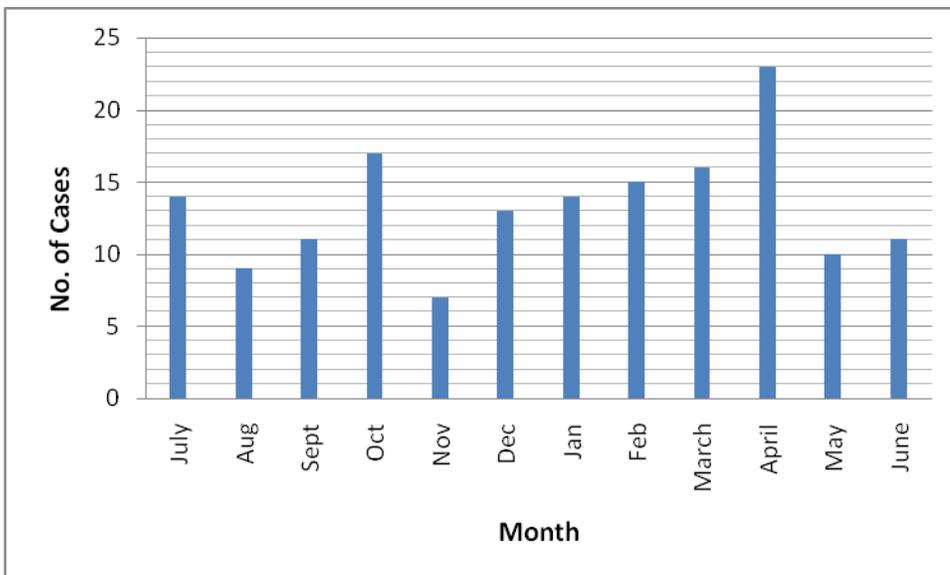
Whether it is due to the far-flung nature of our employment units, lack of employee awareness of the office, the employment climate or other factors at the University of Idaho, use of ombuds' services is lower than at other institutions. Based on a survey by the International Ombudsman Association in 2007, the following are reported case percentages of total employee numbers (although based on very small survey returns):

Government	10% of employees in the reporting unit
International	3%
Education	2%
Corporate	2%
Univ. of Idaho	.7% (based on 2,309 full time employees)

Specific institutions known to UI ombuds are: Louisiana State University, 1% and Hartford Insurance, 1.5%



**Figure 1: Total number of ombuds cases by year.**



**Figure 2: Ombuds cases by month**

### *Nature of the Visitors and Contacts*

A slight majority of visitors to the Ombuds Office were again females (58%), virtually the same as in the past two years. Again this year, most visitors who came to the office did so on their own initiative (76%), rather than by referral.

Table 1 shows that all categories of employees are using the services of the office. Numbers generally follow the proportions of employees in each category and are virtually unchanged from the previous year. The only exception is a slight but steady increase in cases brought by exempt personnel. Typically these are unit directors or other discipline-specific, exempt professionals who have been placed in supervisory roles without adequate preparation.

Student use has not yet increased beyond the few miscellaneous cases that have come to the office in previous years. This may in part be due to lack of awareness. Timely spring publicity about the office's expanded services was missed when an article about the changed policy and services was not included in the *Argonaut*, as requested. Student notification, therefore, relied on bulletin board fliers, direct mail to several offices on campus, and an announcement in the *Register*.

**Table 1: UI Affiliation by Percentage of Cases**

Affiliation	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Classified Staff	43	43	41	44	42	40
Faculty	19	17	23	19	23	20
Administration	12	23	13	13	12	10
Exempt	14	9	13	15	16	18
Graduate Assistants	2	5	3	1	2	1
Other Grad Students	2	1	1	1	1	1
Undergraduates	0	0	0	0	3	3
Retiree	-	-	1	1	-	1
Other	4	2	5	1	1	6
Missing data	0	0	0	4	-	-

In the great majority of cases (74%) only one individual was involved in the case. Of course most cases involved one or more others with whom the visitor was having problems, but they were not contacted in any way. When others were involved and *were* contacted during resolution of an issue, the number of employees in these cases totaled 113 (Table 2). This would bring the combined number of individuals involved (seen or spoken to) in cases to 231, up from 215 the previous year. Most contacts involved office visits (70%), with 26% being phone conversations only and 4% using email or letter only.

Relatively few cases (30%) involved only one visit and no outside input. The rest included multiple visits with the person bringing the case and contact by the ombuds with others

on campus asked to provide information, verification, etc. (e.g. Human Resources, Dean of Students, Human Rights Compliance Office, General Counsel, etc.) Table 3 shows the number of contacts made between an ombuds and the visitor(s) and parties who provided input. Contacts totaled 508 for the year.

**Table 2: Number of Individuals per Ombuds Case**

<u>Individuals Involved</u>	<u>No. of Cases</u>	<u>Percentage of Cases</u>
		%
1	118	74
2	28	18
3	7	4
4	3	2
5	1	1
9	1	1

1 case not reported.

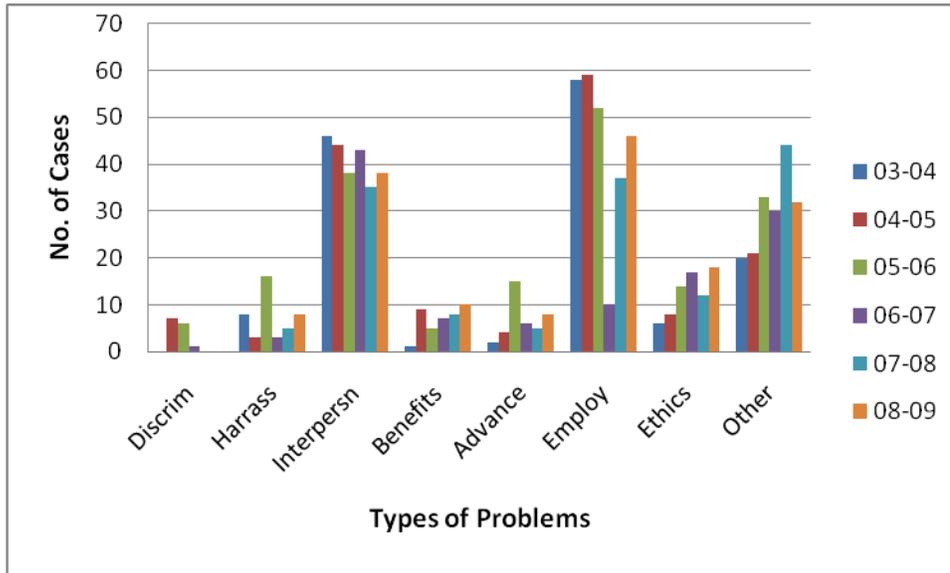
**Table 3: Number of Contacts per Case**

<u>No. of Contacts</u>	<u>Cases</u>	<u>Percentage of Cases</u>
		%
1	48	30
2	37	23
3	21	13
4	19	12
5	11	7
6	5	3
7	4	3
9	3	2
10	3	2
11	1	1
12	3	2
13	1	1
17	1	1

3 cases not reported

### *Nature of the Problems*

In any Ombuds Office, the kinds of problems that are brought to the ombuds are of special importance. These can suggest where change may be needed within the organization or where training efforts may need to be focused. Figure 3 is used to show the distribution of problem categories at the University of Idaho. Each is then discussed in more detail.



**Figure 3: Problem type by year brought to the Ombuds Office**

**Discrimination:** Discrimination complaints have been very low over the past five years and none came to our attention last year. Individuals experiencing discrimination either are well aware of the Office of Human Rights Compliance, where such complaints would be directed, or this lack of cases is a tribute to the employment climate at the University of Idaho.

**Harassment:** Like discrimination, harassment problems appear to be few at the University of Idaho. This year, the 8 reported were perceived as:

General harassment/bullying	5 cases
Sexual harassment	2
Religious harassment	1

**Interpersonal Disputes:** Conflicts between individuals in the workplace occupied the bulk of the ombuds' attention last year, as in preceding years. Almost all cases involved perceptions of incivility, disrespect and/or unfair treatment. Of the 38 cases reported, the visitor to the Ombuds Office was in conflict with a:

co-worker	10 cases
supervisor	7
supervisee	6
administration	4
faculty	3
others	8

**Benefits:** Retirement and/or insurance benefits were the most frequent source of problems in this category. Although the same number (6 cases) as in 2007-08, the 07-08 figure represented a doubling of cases from earlier years. Other issues involved administrative leave (2 cases), sick/annual leave and travel (1 case each).

**Advancement:** Five cases came under this category. Three involved tenure or non-reappointment, and 2 were issues involving a probationary period. However, it is difficult to separate cases regarding 'advancement' from those shown under 'evaluation' as a subcategory of employment (See Table 4). This is discussed below.

**Employment:** 'Employment' is a large, 'catch all' category and registered 46 cases. Of 25 subcategories, "evaluations" was by far the most frequent source of conflict with 13 cases, up 2 from last year. 'Reassignment' resulted in the largest increase from last year, going from zero cases to 4. All subcategories and number of cases in each are shown in Table 4 along with the change from last year.

**Table 4: Breakdown of 46 Cases in ‘Employment’ Category, Ranked by Frequency**

	Change from last year			Change from last year	
Evaluations	13	+2	Reorganization	1	-2
Termination – For cause	5	+1	Accommodations for Disability	0	0
Management	4	-2	Assistantship Appointment	0	0
Job Description	4	+2	Demotion	0	0
Reassignment	4	+4	Hiring Interview	0	0
Probation (performance)	3	+3	Marital Issues	0	0
Working Conditions	3	0	Office Space/Conditions	0	0
Workload	2	+2	Program Termination	0	0
Flex Time/Location	1	+1	Scheduling	0	0
Resignation	1	0	Teaching Load/Course Assign.	0	0
Salary Agreement	1	0	Termination – Layoff	1	+1
Hiring Process	1	-1	Termination – Performance	1	+1
Reclassification	1	-1			

Ethical Concerns: There were 17 cases involving ethical concerns, an increase of 5 over last year. Fiscal management was most commonly behind the reason behind the visitors being at the Ombuds Office. Cases were distributed as follows:

Fiscal management	5 cases
Records management	3
Academic dishonesty	2
Health/safety	1
Others	6

It is important to note that although some of the case categories listed above show zero, it does *not* mean that the topic was not part of any visitor’s reason for using the Ombuds Office. Quite frequently the visit actually was due to numerous causes. The nature of our data management requires that we select the *predominant* or precipitating reason for contact. For example, an employee might be having a difficult time getting along with her supervisor. The reasons for the incompatibility are numerous and continuous, including disputes about taking leave, perceived mis-management of the budget, and alleged ethical lapses and favoritism. This case would probably be classified only as an ‘interpersonal dispute’ between the visitor and her supervisor even though it touches upon several kinds of issues.

On the other hand, some cases defy placement in *any* of the established categories. These are shown below.

## Others:

Thirty cases did not fit the established case categories. Significantly, 10 of them involved entire departments or other work units. In most of these cases, the units were/are so dysfunctional that there is no other way to classify the situation. These cases were brought to the Ombuds Office by various kinds of employees – sometimes a frustrated administrator, sometimes one or two faculty, or sometimes someone from the staff. These again proved to be complex cases, extremely time-consuming and far more significant to the university and the quality of the work environment than are reflected in mere data summaries. A great amount of the ombuds' efforts have been devoted to resolving or preventing further deterioration of these cases.

General descriptions, when possible, within the 'other' category, and number of cases, are shown below in ranked order:

	Number of cases	Change from last year
Department/unit function	10	-2
Miscellaneous	7	-7
Committee function	3	+3
Academic issues	3	+1
Department head (misc. problems)	3	-5
Disciplinary action	3	-2
Financial aid	1	+1
Training	0	-2

## Resolution of Problems

There are many tools and processes used by ombuds in an attempt to help members of the university community. Four general categories of action are summarized in Table 5. ‘Problem Exploration’ is used in most cases, usually along with another action, so categories are not mutually exclusive.

**Table 5: Actions Used by Ombuds**

Action	Cases	Percentage of Cases
Problem exploration	130	81%
Information only is provided	49	31
Intercession (e.g. mediation, shuttle diplomacy)	49	31
Refer to Others (e.g. HR, COGS, vice provost)	40	25

### ***Fairness and the Brain***

In a recent article by Kathleen H. Canul in the IOA *Independent Voice*, interesting results from the field of neuroscience are described. Using a functional magnetic resonance imaging machine, scientists searched for regions of elevated brain activity to document biological responses to perceived unfairness. Not surprisingly, they found what they were looking for – perceived fairness increased activity in the orbital frontal cortex, one of the brain’s ‘reward centers.’ Perceived unfairness elevated activity in the insula region, the area of the brain associated with negative emotion.

Other research has investigated the role of serotonin, a neurotransmitter associated with emotion modulation and social behavior. Reduced levels of serotonin are associated with depression and anxiety. Now it has been documented that reduced levels of serotonin heighten perceptions of unfairness.

The interpretation of the reported studies are what most of us know – fairness is associated with more positive emotions (and most likely results such as greater productivity, a more stable work force, more satisfying home lives, etc.). The author concluded *...It stands to reason that ombudspersons have the potential to significantly enhance a sense of contentment in people’s lives, and the ‘rewards’ that follow benefit both the giver and receiver of fairness.* We have long known this, but it is nice to have science to back us up!

## **Other Services Provided**

The Ombuds Office once again provided employee in-service training and academic presentations on various communication and human relations skills, civility, conflict management and others. In addition, service was provided as group facilitators and as designated neutrals and process monitors. During the past year, the following presentations and services were provided, primarily by Roxanne Schreiber whose credentials include being a licensed professional counselor and holding a Masters degree in Counseling and Human Service and Vocational Education with an emphasis in adult training and development.

### ***Training and In-service Presentations***

- Skills for Good Supervisors (class leadership lecture)
- Conflict Management Toolkit: Skills for Developing Leaders and Supervisors (class leadership lecture)
- Self-stewardship and the Sustainable Professional (Women's Leadership Conference presentation)
- Managing Conflict in Organizations: The Role of the Ombuds (2 class lecture sessions)
- Working Together: Tools for Building Successful Teams (class lecture)
- Managing Difference and Conflict (Multicultural Students Peer Mentor Retreat presentation)
- Building a Community of Professionals: Thriving in a Changing Workplace (department training session)
- Keeping Your Cool While Other's Lose Theirs -- Managing Intense Interactions (2 sessions, department training)
- Crucial Conversations (department training)
- Building a Community of Professionals: Creating a Positive Workplace (department training)
- Change, Climate and Culture (assistance to external consultant at department workshop)
- Setting the Tone for Climate and Culture: Communication (assisted external consultant, 2 sessions)
- Setting the Tone for Climate and Culture: Emotions (assisted external consultant, 2 sessions)
- Building Community (assistance to external consultant, 2-day department retreat)

### ***Campus Committees/Service***

- Goal Four Implementation Team
- Faculty Review Committee
- Request for Innovation Envisioning Group
- Campus Preparedness Team
- Threat Assessment Team
- Professional Development Steering Committee
- University Judicial Council

### *Professional Service*

- International Ombudsman Association Board of Directors
  - Professional Development Committee

### *Public/Community Service*

- Mediated neighborhood multi-party dispute
- Facilitated community group meeting
- American Red Cross, Disaster Mental Health Counselor, volunteer
- North Central Idaho Critical Incident Stress Management Team, volunteer

## **Professional Development**

Both ombuds consider continuing education essential to providing quality service to the university. During the past year, staying current and professional development included reading the newsletter of the International Ombudsman Association and participating in its member list serve. In her role as a director of IOA, Roxanne also attended the organization's annual conference. The topics of other professional development activities included:

- Campus Civility and Harassment Codes and the First Amendment (Webinar offered through UI Counsel's Office)
- Suicide Prevention and Intervention
- Sexual Harassment and PTSD
- Introduction to Incident Command System (FEMA Course: FEMA IS 100.a)
- Incident Command System for Higher Education (FEMA course: FEMA 100.HE ICS)
- Leadership & Influence (FEMA course: FEMA IS240)
- Threat Assessment Team Training (Webinar offered through UI Risk Management)
- Motivational Interviewing and Healthy Behavior Change (Webinar, National Wellness Institute, Steven Berg-Smith)

## Effectiveness of the Ombuds Office

Although the quantity and nature of cases are one measure of accountability, of even greater importance is – what are the impacts or outcomes of the cases that are handled in the Ombuds Office? Do these accrue savings to the university or provide other benefits commensurate with the inputs?

Unfortunately, these benefits are difficult to measure or report. Confidentiality precludes the use of user satisfaction surveys or the description of specific cases. Perhaps the best we can do is to ask rhetorically: What is the worth of having a place where a distraught employee can find a willing listener? When conflicts are resolved, what is the value of the time thereafter devoted to more productive work? What is the value of preventing a difficult situation from escalating into a formal grievance procedure, litigation, or violence? If a single law suit is prevented, what savings result? If information is provided or employees are directed to the people and offices that can help them solve a problem, what is the value to morale, job satisfaction and a healthier workplace environment?

We can say with certainty and in general terms that all of the above scenarios again played out in the Ombuds Office during the past year.

Beginning in the 2006-2007 academic year, we initiated a measurement of ‘outcomes’ or ‘impacts,’ based on self-analysis of completed cases. We did this by creating a scale of what the ombuds consider a range between the ‘satisfactory’ and ‘unsatisfactory’ resolution of cases. It is not intended as a measure of visitor satisfaction. That is fraught with problems as has been found by other members of the International Ombudsman Association who from time to time have attempted that kind of assessment. The main reason is that visitors’ perceptions of “successful” are usually biased by their role in the case and their desired or expected outcomes. That is, if the results of even the fairest, most skillfully handled problem are not favorable to the individual, he/she is likely to view the outcome as unsuccessful. The role of an ombuds is not to ‘win’ cases for a visitor, but to assure fairness in some means of resolution (which sometimes is not supportive of the visitor’s perception of the issue). The scale attempts to evaluate the outcome and impact of each case as objectively as possible.

Application of the outcomes/impacts scale to 160 cases in 2008-09 resulted in 74% of the cases being resolved ‘satisfactorily,’ 24% having a ‘neutral’ outcome (i.e. involvement of the Ombuds Office had little or no significance on the case one way or the other), and 2% were judged to be ‘unsatisfactorily’ resolved (in all cases, due to lack of cooperation by one of the parties involved). It is important to note that a seemingly neutral outcome using our current evaluation method may, in fact, under-represent the actual impact of the visit. Anecdotally, the ombuds know that the experience of thinking through an issue “aloud” and being heard, may indirectly encourage a positive trajectory—or head off a negative trajectory-- in an issue.

**Table 5: Self-Appraisal of Outcomes/Impacts Ombuds Cases, 2008-09**

Outcome Category	Percentage of Cases (N=160)
<b>I. Resolved satisfactorily with Ombuds Office assistance 74%</b>	
Agreement/compromise reached through mediation; formal action avoided; visitor given another chance or situation otherwise satisfactorily resolved.	9%
Conflict resolved short of mediation; may involve 'shuttle diplomacy' or similar intervention, workshops with entire unit, or other techniques; formal action not taken.	12%
Ombuds served, by invitation or suggestion, as neutral observer; may involve role as moderator, but not mediator; party(ies) satisfied with outcome; formal action not taken.	3%
Information only was provided by Ombuds; and/or helps party to self-advocate; visitor satisfied.	47%
Action resulted in policy or system modification/improvement	0
Other	4%
<b>Neutral Outcome (Ombuds Office had no significant impact) 24%</b>	
Ombuds role was primarily a neutral listener; little or no 'coaching' or additional information provided. Visitor already had or did not need information, but needed 'someone to listen;' may have received confirmation of ideas/plans, but nothing new added by Ombuds.	9%
Visitor initiated and then canceled or 'vanished' after setting appointment or before follow-up action was completed.	4%
Situation 'unrepairable' upon arrival (e.g. T.H. already is terminated, tenure is denied for good reason, or visitor resigned).	7%
Other	3%
<b>Results Unsatisfactory 2%</b>	
Visitor disgruntled with Ombuds efforts and discontinued visits or contacts.	0
Visitor disregarded advice/solution and suffered consequences.	0
Unfair practice or situation not resolved nor corrected due to lack of cooperation.	2%
Other	0

## Concerns and Recommendations

*The ombuds are encouraged to comment on policies, procedures, and processes with an eye to positive future change. These observations should be shared with the administrators and bodies with jurisdiction over those policies, procedures, and processes. (FSH 3820 B-6)*

One function of an Ombuds Office is to use its unique perspectives and experience to help facilitate positive change in the campus community. In turn, this will help prevent future problems and contribute to the achievement of Objective A of the university's Organization, Culture and Climate Goal: *Sustain and enhance a positive work climate to enhance the quality of university life*. It is in the spirit of this responsibility that the following concerns and recommendations are offered, along with the key office or individual who is in the best position to study and/or implement the recommendation.

### *Recommendation*

### *Attention*

1. **The '360 degree evaluation method' should be used only when trained in this technique.**

**Administrators,  
supervisors/HR**

Traditionally, employees are evaluated by their supervisor only. The 360 degree method involves evaluation by fellow workers as well. The system can be easily mis-used or abused, especially in units with few personnel or when used by untrained evaluators. If questionnaires are used and results summarized for the final evaluation, the employee should have the right to view the questions and aggregated responses (with names or other identifying content removed).

2. **The attendance of third parties at evaluation interviews should be discouraged.**

**All supervisors/HR**

An employee's evaluation is often an emotional event and should be treated in a respectful and private manner. Having a third party present should be done only in exceptional cases and involve a designated neutral rather than another member of a department/unit. Having an administrative assistant or other 'witness' sit in on a session should be discouraged. When a third party will be present at the behest of a supervisor, the person being evaluated should be notified of this in advance and have the opportunity to have someone attend in his/her support.

One-on-one evaluations are supported by language found in FSH 3340 A-5 & 6 and FSH 3320-e.

- 3. Provide explanations when rules or procedures are changed or new rules are issued and, ideally, allow for input before finalizing the decision.**

**General/OSP**

This common courtesy would promote understanding and support instead of resentment.

- 4. When reorganization or restructuring occur and responsibilities and/or reporting structures change, details should be worked out in advance and fully communicated.**

**Administrators/  
Supervisors**

This extends beyond courtesy. When communication is incomplete or overlooked, confusion and unnecessary misunderstandings can undermine the best of attempts at improvement.

- 5. In courses that will expose students to sexually explicit material, animal suffering, violence or content known to be objectionable on religious grounds, sensitivity should be shown to potentially offended students without prejudice.**

**Vice Provost/  
Faculty**

Warning regarding the above should be placed on the course syllabus and issued during the first class period.

For students who choose to enroll despite such a warning, an alternative should be provided – without penalty – to abstain from seeing or participating in discussions about the objectionable material or writing papers on the subject.

- 6. Restore the standard of broad, open searches for all interim positions.**

**HR/Affirmative  
Action/Administration**

Interim appointments and other ‘on board’ personnel should be required to compete for permanent positions at all levels and following adequate advertisements of the position, including reasonable advertising in local and regional newspapers.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Ombuds Office could not operate or be effective without the cooperation of staff, faculty and administrators with whom we work in trying to resolve conflicts and find equitable solutions to problems. We also appreciate the support of the President and Provost’s Office in making the services of the Ombuds Office available to the University of Idaho community.