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UMKC Faculty Ombudsperson Annual Report 2016

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This academic year is my sixth as UMKC Faculty Ombudsperson. This report summarizes my activities in the 2015-2016 academic year.

2015-2016 Ombuds Activities

Assisting visitors: To date, I have seen 13 faculty visitors from five different colleges/schools. Interactions included emails, telephone and face-to-face meetings. Other activities included researching cases, referrals, or conferring with other professionals. Several visitors requested multiple meetings. Prior year counts are:

2014-2015: 9 visitors, 5 units

2013-2014: 13 visitors, 7 units

2012-2013: 24 visitors, 9 units

2011-2012: 14 visitors, 6 units

2010-2011: 6 visitors, 5 units

Promoting ombuds activities: The main focus of ombuds promotions this year was on the following:

- I started a blog featuring ombuds-related articles on such topics relevant to workplace conflict, communication, etc.
- Every year I offer to do a short presentation of ombuds services at faculty meetings via emails to deans. Most of these emails go unanswered. This year I presented to two different academic units.

Education and networking

I am chair of the Academy of Management's Ombudsperson Committee, which seeks to assist Academy members. AOM is a 15,000-member academic association for scholars in the management field. I frequently network with the two other trained faculty ombudspersons on the committee. I attended the International Ombudsman Association conference in April. The Academic Ombuds Conference will be held at the University of Kansas in late July, and I will attend if my personal travel plans allow.

Visitors' Issues

While personal identities and affiliations of visitors and other specifics of ombuds visits are confidential, the following themes were raised most often. These issues recur from year to year.

- Most visitors' issues relate to conflicts and communication problems with faculty supervisors, particularly regarding decisions about performance evaluations, promotion and tenure review, or the five-year post-tenure review process. This continues to be the most frequently presented category in the last four years.
- Difficult relationships with colleagues also showed itself as an issue. Often this related to a lack of communication and/or under-developed communication skills.

Recommendations for University/School/Department/Faculty Responses

The following recommendations carry over from previous years and are still relevant:

- A **faculty-focused e-communication vehicle** should be developed to provide a forum for discussion of issues.
- **Department chairs and other faculty supervisors should receive full, ongoing supervisory training.**
- **Conflict management and communication training for all faculty** would enhance our working environment.
- **All Schools/College/Departments to ensure their bylaws and policies are clear, updated, and complete.**