

UMKC Faculty Ombudsperson Annual Report 2017

Nancy E. Day, Faculty Ombudsperson

This academic year is my seventh as UMKC Faculty Ombudsperson. This report summarizes this year's activities.

2016-2017 Ombuds Activities

Assisting visitors

To date, I have seen 18 faculty visitors from nine 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:

2015-2016: 13 visitors, 5 units

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 focus of Ombuds promotions this year was the UMKC Faculty Ombuds blog, featuring ombuds-related articles on such topics relevant to workplace conflict, communication, etc. I also provided training to the UMKC Libraries; this kind of outreach assists in communicating my services to the broader university community.

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 in Minneapolis, presenting a workshop with my AOM Ombuds Colleagues on enhancing research collaborations. We are also presenting a professional development workshop at the August national Academy of Management Meetings in Atlanta entitled, "A Conversation with the AOM Ombuds: Handling Professional Conflicts."

Assisting the new UMKC Staff Ombuds in her role and logistics

I worked with Dr. Marita Barkis, new UMKC Staff Ombudsperson, in relating to her my experiences and learnings regarding ombuds work, setting up her new office, and coordinating the office space for dual use. Currently we are sharing the office at 4747 Troost.

Visitors' Issues

These issues have been mentioned in prior annual reports and continue to recur. While personal identities and affiliations of visitors and other specifics of ombuds visits are confidential, the following themes continue to be raised most often.

- 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. It seems to occur more often in some schools than others.
- Difficult relationships with colleagues also showed itself as an issue. Often this related to a lack of communication and difficulties in using good communication skills. Sometimes these situations were exacerbated or prolonged because school leadership did not help manage conflicts effectively.

Recommendations for University/School/Department/Faculty Responses

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

- *Department chairs and other faculty supervisors should receive full, ongoing **supervisory training**.* These are high-risk positions and the lack of consistency in performance across departments and schools creates inequities and inefficiencies that limit the university's effectiveness as well as faculty motivation and productivity.
- ***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.***
- A ***faculty-focused e-communication vehicle*** should be developed to provide a forum for discussion of issues. While the Provost's and Faculty Senate's websites provide a wealth of information, a "push" communication strategy is needed to communicate important information directly to full-time faculty.