

# UMKC Faculty Ombudsperson Annual Report 2018

## *Nancy E. Day, Faculty Ombudsperson*

---

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

### ***2017-2018 Ombuds Activities***

#### ***Assisting visitors***

To date, I have seen 17 faculty visitors from seven 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:

2016-2017: 18 visitors, 9 units

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***

In the fall of 2017, I made regular blog entries to the UMKC Faculty blog. However, due to the illness and death of a close family member, I was unable follow through on the blog or other promotional activities. I hope to increase promotions in the upcoming academic year, in conjunction with the staff ombudsperson.

#### ***Education and networking***

I am now serving the final year of my term as 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 Richmond, Virginia and met with colleagues there.

#### ***Assisting the new UMKC Staff Ombuds in her role and logistics***

I continued to work periodically with Dr. Marita Barkis, the UMKC Staff Ombudsperson, in relating to her my experiences and learnings regarding ombuds work. We continue to share an office at 4747 Troost.

### ***Visitors' Issues***

As mentioned in prior annual reports, the same issues 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 lack of awareness in how to use good communication skills. School leadership did not seem to be able to help manage these internal conflicts effectively.

## ***Recommendations for University/School/Department/Faculty Responses***

The following three 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.***

Additionally, I recommend that UMKC add an ***appeals process to its performance evaluation system***. An appeals process is a best practice in sophisticated HR systems. Faculty who come to me with issues or disagreements about their performance appraisal outcomes would benefit from having a clear means to achieve due process regarding their dispute.

I am grateful to both the Provost's office as well as the Faculty Senate for their ongoing support in my role. I am happy to be helpful to faculty who seek assistance in resolving their workplace problems productively and civilly.