Faculty Ombuds Program
Annual Report 2013-2014

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September 18, 2014
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Summary

Highlights

- Dr. Michael Ketterer leaves the coordinator’s position and is replaced by Dr. Eugene Moan in July 2013.
- Dr. Moan completes the initial training as an Ombudsman through the International Ombudsman Association July 2013.
- Coordinator meets with key persons in the university community to establish personal contacts and to review the services being offered through the Faculty Ombuds Program (FOP).
- During the 2013 – 2014 academic year, fifty-one (51) total contacts were made with the FOP representing thirty-five (35) unique individuals.
- Utilization of the services of the program has remained consistent over the past several years. The majority of the faculty visitors during 2013 -2014 were full time faculty.
- The largest category of concern involved peer and colleague interactions.
- Evaluative processes and relationships were the second largest category of concerns presented to the FOP.
- Individual consultation was the primary intervention. In most cases, problem solving strategies or clarification of university policies were the main subject of the consultation. Referral to other campus resources was recommended in sixteen (16) cases. In seven (7) situations a facilitated discussion was undertaken involving the original visitor and another party or parties with whom they were in conflict.
- Workshop entitled How to effectively involve distance based faculty members in department meetings was held with approximately 30 persons in attendance (Spring, 2014).
- Hosting of the statewide meeting of the Arizona Ombudsman Association in the University Union in August, 2014.
Background of the Faculty Ombudsman Program at Northern Arizona University

The services of an Ombudsman have been offered to various constituencies at Northern Arizona University for over twenty years. Beginning with a program that served faculty only, the Ombudsman Office expanded to provide services to all segments of the university community. The scope of services offered expanded across time, eventually reaching its apex during the 1999-2000 academic year when nearly 700 contacts were made with the office which was staffed by two full time ombudsmen, one full time staff member, and a cadre of faculty volunteers who were trained in mediation techniques and who were assigned to mediate faculty disputes. During this time services were available to faculty, classified staff, students, and outside parties in their dealings with university personnel. Due to budgetary and other concerns, funding to the Ombuds program was reduced resulting in staff reductions and limits on the scope of services. Ombudsman services were not offered at all from 2004-2006 at which time the Faculty Ombuds Program in its present form was re-established in 2006 with a half time position under the direction of Dr. Gary Buckley. The Faculty Ombuds Program (FOP) is funded through the Provost’s Office. Dr. Phoebe Morgan served as the Coordinator of the program from 2008-2011, succeeded by Dr. Michael Ketterer who served as coordinator from 2011-2013.

Present status of the Faculty Ombuds Program

Upon Dr. Ketterer’s acceptance of an administrative position at another university, the present coordinator Dr. Eugene Moan was appointed to the coordinator position in the summer of 2013. Dr. Moan is a full professor in the Educational Psychology Department of the College of Education and has been employed in various roles at NAU since 1981. Dr. Moan is a licensed psychologist trained in mediation through Dispute Resolution Services and has completed the initial training as an Ombudsman through the International Ombudsman Association of which he is an associate member. The coordinator’s position continues to be a half time appointment. Services are available to all full and part time faculty whether based on the Mountain Campus or at other locations. The program office is located in room 230 of Peterson Hall, a private location outside of the main flow of university traffic.

Services of the Faculty Ombuds Program are offered under the Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). These services follow the IOA tenets of being 1) neutral, that is not advocating for a person or outcome but rather advocating for a fair process in all situations, 2) informal, with concerns being addressed outside of other processes of record (such as the Affirmative Action office, etc.), 3) confidential, unless that confidentiality is waived by the party seeking services or if an eminent threat is being made that would disrupt the safety of the university community, and 4) independent, in that the Coordinator functions outside of the usual university administrative channels. Recipients of services through the FOP come voluntarily. The Coordinator has no power to demand that any party participate in services offered. The FOP is not an office of record, and no written notes concerning the issues presented by any visitor to the office are kept. The present Annual Report is the only documentation of services provided through the FOP during a given academic year.
Faculty Ombuds Office activities 2013 – 2014

With the departure of Dr. Ketterer in the summer 2013, no overlap between persons appointed to the coordinator’s position as recommended in previous reports was possible. The first priority was to train and orient the present coordinator to the role of Ombudsman. This was accomplished during the three day training program provided by the International Ombudsman Association in July 2013.

The next order of business was to have the new coordinator meet with key persons in the university community to establish personal contacts and to review the services being offered through the FOP. The following offices and persons were included in these introductory sessions during the Fall 2013:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacts with key parties Fall 2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with Phoebe Morgan, former FOP coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephonic consultation with Michael Ketterer, former FOP coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with Daniel Kain to outline duties and expectations</td>
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<td>Meeting with Campus Security personnel – Cindy Cox and Marc Burdiss</td>
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<td>Meeting with Affirmative Action staff – Priscilla Mills and Pam Heinonen</td>
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<td>Meeting with Employee Assistance and Wellness director Betsy Kerr</td>
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<td>Meeting with Human Resources director Diane Verkest</td>
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<td>Presentation to the Academic Chairs Council</td>
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<td>Presentation to the President’s Academic Leadership team</td>
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With training completed and contacts with key parties conducted, office hours were established and visitor contacts with the FOP began to occur. Over the course of the 2013 – 2014 academic year, fifty-one (51) total contacts were made with the FOP representing thirty-five (35) unique individuals. Faculty members constituted the largest category of persons who contacted the FOP for assistance (20), followed by classified staff (5), administrators (2), and academic professionals (1). The classification of seven (7) other visitors was not recorded or not made available. These visitors were all faculty members, but it was not determined whether they were full or part time, nor was their college/departmental affiliation recorded. It is interesting to note that while services are not provided to classified staff, contacts continue to be made with the FOP from persons in this group. This is consistent with observations made in previous annual
reports. In cases of contact from classified staff, the concerns of the staff member were attended to and referrals to other resources were made, generally either the Human Resources office or the Employee Assistance and Wellness program.

A chart depicting the composition of visitors to the FOP is found on the next page.

The number of faculty visitors was generally in line with the numbers seen in the 2011 – 2012 academic year (26) and the 2009 – 2010 academic year (23). Numbers for comparison are drawn from these annual reports due to other reports not being immediately available.
During the 2013 – 2014 academic year, 90% of the faculty contacts involved full time personnel.

**Presenting issues**

The presenting issues of faculty and administrators who made contact with the FOP was recorded using the standardized classification system of the International Ombudsman Association. A comparison of presenting concerns is seen in the graph below.
The largest category of concern involved peer and colleague interactions. The majority of these concerns involved the visitor’s perception that they were being treating in an uncivil manner by another member of the university community. These concerns were usually addressed by either a problem solving session involving the visitor who could then decide on a course of action or a facilitated conversation between the visitor and the other party. These sessions were always conducted in the privacy of the Ombuds office and each party was a voluntary participant. It is interesting and encouraging to note that no third party invited to participate in such a discussion during the past academic year refused to be involved. This is interpreted to represent the kind of good will generally found on the NAU campus, even among persons who may be in disagreement with one another.

Evaluative processes and relationships were the second largest category of concerns presented to the FOP. Many of these cases involved faculty who although full time employees were not in tenure-track appointments. Issues pertaining to retention and salary were the most common concerns. Resolution of these cases generally involved clarifying personnel policies and procedures. In a small number of cases the defined evaluative process was not followed. When this was discovered the faculty members involved were re-evaluated utilizing the correct process and in at least one case involving a part-time faculty member a re-classification was made resulting a salary increase per course taught.

Compensation and benefits were the third largest category of concerns presented to the FOP. Issues pertaining to merit pay and “exemplary performance” were the most common concerns of full time faculty, both tenure/tenure track and non-tenure track. Clarification of university and college/department procedures for awarding salary increases was the primary intervention in nearly all of these cases. Delineation of the faculty member’s right to respond at each level of annual review was the most common form of assistance offered.

Concern over administrative support for faculty efforts, rules and guidelines for the use of grant funds, and adherence to the stated university mission and goals represent the remaining issues brought to the attention of the FOP. As with most other concerns, clarification of policies and facilitation of discussions between parties were the most often utilized interventions for addressing these issues.

The types of interventions provided by the FOP during the past year are seen below.
In twenty-one (21) cases individual consultation was the primary intervention. In most cases, problem solving strategies or clarification of university policies were the main subject of the consultation. Referral to other campus resources was recommended in sixteen (16) cases. In seven (7) situations a facilitated discussion was undertaken involving the original visitor and another party or parties with whom they were in conflict. The total number of interventions exceeds the number of visitors because in some cases multiple means of addressing the issues presented by the visitor were utilized. For example, after an individual consultation a referral to another campus resource may have been made.
Other activities of the FOB coordinator

In addition to the outreach activities conducted during the Fall 2013 to establish relationships with key campus offices, two additional activities were undertaken to further the recognition of the FOP as an important resource. In the Spring 2014 a workshop was presented prior to the monthly meeting of the Academic Chairs Council to address an issue that had arisen through contacts with the FOP by faculty members serving in locations other than the Mountain Campus. Faculty members who are not on campus during department and other meetings often feel ignored, isolated and unable to effectively participate in the meeting. A workshop entitled **How to effectively involve distance based faculty members in department meetings** was held with approximately 30 persons in attendance.

The second major activity undertaken in the summer was the hosting of the statewide meeting of the Arizona Ombudsman Association in the University Union in August, 2014. Approximately thirty (30) participants from as far away as Tucson heard presentations on the topics of mental health first aid, techniques for de-escalating volatile situations, and the duty of Ombudsmen to warn persons who may in danger due to threats made by visitors to Ombuds programs. The meeting was positively evaluated by the members of the group. Involvement in the state Ombudsman Association provides a much needed network of colleagues for the NAU Faculty Ombudsman and hosting this meeting on campus establishes NAU as a leader in the Ombuds community in Arizona.

In addition to the outreach activities, quarterly meetings between the Faculty Ombudsman and the directors of other campus resource offices (Employee Assistance and Wellness, Affirmative Action, Human Resources) and Vice-Provost Kain were held to informally discuss issues that were being brought to the attention of each office. Rules of confidentiality were always followed.
in these meetings. This allows for identification of emerging issues that affect the university community and the opportunity to implement some advanced planning to address these concerns. This also provides an opportunity for the involved parties to discuss resources and services that may be needed to address emerging campus issues.

**Trends and implications**

The FOP continues to be a valuable resource to the university. Utilization of the services of the program has remained consistent over the past several years. The majority of the faculty visitors are full time faculty, a shift from information provided in previous reports. This may be due in part to a reduction in the overall number of part time faculty due to the increased use of non-tenured, full time clinical faculty now teaching for the university. It may also be due to part time faculty primarily not being physically located in Flagstaff and therefore not being aware of the services provided through the FOP.

As has been the case in the past, the majority of visitor concerns are in regard to issues that involve interactions with others in the work setting. This includes both peers and those to whom the faculty member reports such as department chairs and deans of colleges. The FOP has been an effective tool for addressing these concerns and providing assistance in undertaking sometimes difficult conversations between parties. The willingness of persons invited to participate in these facilitated discussions is a strong indicator that in many instances members of the academic community want to address and resolve interpersonal issues without resorting to formal grievance procedures.

Compensation is an issue of concern for a number of the visitors to the FOP. Compensation is often dependent on annual evaluation of the faculty member’s performance. In most cases if the process of evaluation is transparent, the faculty member’s concerns about unequal treatment can be resolved.

Contact with the FOP by non-faculty members of the university community, particularly the classified staff, continue to be made. In the case of staff, the services of an Ombudsman may allow them to address concerns without going through the Human Resources department and potentially having their issue become a matter of record. Follow up appointments are not provided.

Contacts with the FOP continue to be made outside of the academic year. While the number per week is reduced in comparison to the school year, these contacts should not be ignored as they represent issues that faculty want to address before too much time has passed. During the immediate past summer services were provided to these visitors on an as needed basis. Consideration of a partial stipend for the Coordinator over the summer should be considered.

**Goals for the 2014 – 2015 academic year**
The Faculty Ombuds Program will continue to provide high quality services to members of the NAU faculty. Messages left with the Office will be returned within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays.

Outreach activities to inform faculty about the services of the FOP will be conducted. Intended activities will include a presentation to the Faculty Senate, distribution of this report as is appropriate, brown bag presentations on issues of importance to faculty at least once each semester, and continued coordination with other campus resources to ensure effective referral to the FOP when an appropriate service can be provided.

During the coming year offers will be made to conduct informational presentations about the services of the FOP to colleges and academic departments with the university.

Periodic meetings with the leaders of other campus resources to monitor emerging issues within the university community will continue to be held. This provides for a proactive approach to addressing issues which may be brought to the attention of the Ombuds office.