



WELCOME TO THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Office of the Ombudsman welcomes any member of the Penn community who is experiencing difficulty, conflict, or confusion in his or her work, studies, or life at the University more broadly. We offer an accessible and safe place to resolve differences, explore matters of concern, get information, improve communication, and generate and evaluate options.

Our mission is to ameliorate conditions that interfere with a person's ability to find satisfaction as a member of the Penn community. Our door is open to students, staff, and faculty. We encourage people to contact us at the earliest stages of a problem so that we can assist before it escalates.

The Office of the Ombudsman conducts its business in accordance with the following standards:

Confidentiality

The Office of the Ombudsman is a confidential resource available to all members of the Penn community. "Confidentiality" means that staff of the Office will not disclose any information you share with us, unless you have given us permission to do so. The exception to this confidentiality is if you disclose information that gives reasonable cause to believe that there is an imminent risk of serious harm to you or someone else.

We do recognize that some members of the University community may be hesitant to disclose concerns due to fear of retaliation by persons about whom issues have been raised. The University's *Policy Against Retaliation* is clear that the retaliation against one who makes a *bona fide* disclosure of an issue of concern is strictly prohibited.

Neutrality

The Office of the Ombudsman neither takes a side in a dispute, nor advocates for an individual, a particular point of view, office, school, center, department or any other party. Our role is to be an objective third party who is available to assist with the resolution of the matter.

Informality

The Office of the Ombudsman operates informally. We do not keep the names of individuals who visit the office, or any documents or materials. We keep no formal records. If you would like us to review documents (e.g., a transcript, performance evaluation, email, or any other material), we will do so but will either return the materials to you or shred them upon completion of the engagement. Any personal notes we take will also be shredded upon the conclusion of the engagement. Electronic communications with the office are strongly discouraged, as is noted on our web site. Emails and voicemail messages are not stored, and are promptly deleted.

Independence

The Office operates independently of the University hierarchy and reports only to the President or a designee from the President's Center, so that we can avoid the risk of undue influence by other members of the University hierarchy.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THESE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE, PLEASE RAISE THEM AT THE OUTSET OF OUR CONSULTATION.