Tell me about the “ombuds” - what the office does and how it can benefit me?

stonybrook.edu/ombuds
OMBUDS OFFICE

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University Ombudsman*

An Ombuds
Listens with an open mind
Helps resolve problems fairly

* An Ombudsman is gender-neutral in origin and is a Swedish term.

www.stonybrook.edu/ombuds - (631) 632-9200
Learn about the Ombuds Office’s role at Stony Brook

Understand how the Ombuds Office differs from other offices such as HR, OEA, Unions, Employee/Labor Relations, Student Conduct and Community Standards, EAP/CAPS, Healthier U/Student Health & Wellness, Employee Health, etc.

Determine how you could benefit from a consultation with the ombuds

Recognize the value of the ombuds in helping to foster an environment of diversity, equity and inclusion
What is an Ombuds?

A person who serves as a designated neutral within a specific organization and provides conflict resolution and problem-solving services to members of the organization.

Where does an Ombuds work?

In corporations, colleges and universities, hospitals, government and non-governmental agencies, nonprofits and media, etc. (e.g. NIH, UN, WHO, NPR, etc.)
Conflict is considered among the most significant and reducible costs to an organization (Freres, Martin 2013).

Cost of unresolved conflict:

- REPLACEMENT
- RETENTION
- PRODUCTIVITY
- MANAGERS LOST TIME
- EMPLOYEE LOST TIME
- ENGAGEMENT
- MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING
- REPUTATION & IMAGE
- LEGAL & DISPUTE COSTS
Confidentiality
The Ombuds holds the identity and all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exceptions are when there is imminent risk of serious harm, or where required by Title IX and other state and federal laws.

Informality
The Ombuds assists in resolving conflicts or complaints at an informal level. The Ombuds does not participate in any formal, internal or external investigative or adjudicative procedures or make or overturn administrative decisions. As an informal resource, the Ombuds is not authorized to accept notice (formal complaints) for the university, except in Title IX cases, but will refer to the appropriate office. Use of the Ombuds Office is voluntary.
Independence
The Ombuds Office operates independent from other organizational entities. It reports to the President’s Office for budgetary and administrative purposes. The Ombuds Office conveys perceived issues and trends and makes recommendations to improve the academic and work environment. The ombuds provides anonymous, aggregate statistical data and does not keep formal records.

Neutrality
The Ombuds is neutral, impartial, and unaligned in the handling of concerns and complaints. In considering the rights and interests of all parties, the Ombuds assists parties in reaching mutually acceptable agreements that are fair, equitable and consistent with the mission and policies of the University. The Ombuds will not serve as an advocate for the university or an individual.
WHO OMBUDS SERVES

*Individuals & groups*
- Students
- Faculty & Staff
- Visitors
- Parents
- Alumni
- Supervisors, Directors
- Department Heads

*Senior management*
- VPs, AVPs, Deans, Chairs

WHAT AN OMBUDS DOES

- Conflict resolution
- Informal mediation/shuttle diplomacy
- Consultation and coaching
- Information/referral
- Prevention
- ✔ Outreach – tabling/fairs
- ✔ Ombuds Orientation
- ✔ Training
- ✔ Skill development
• Academic Issues/Integrity
• Conflicts of Interest
• Change & Transition
• Communication
• Discrimination
• Equity of Treatment
• Ethical Dilemmas
• Harassment
• Health & Safety Issues

• Incivility/Rudeness
• Interpersonal Conflicts
• Organizational climate
• Performance (evaluations, grades, promotion/tenure)
• Policy & Procedural Issues
• Supervision/Management
• Intellectual Property/Authorship Concerns
When should I contact the “ombuds?”

- Anytime, but preferably the earlier the better
- No problem is too big or too small
- There is never a wrong reason to call

The “ombuds” can always point you in the right direction.
Ombuds services: PREVENTION

➢ Outreach - tabling/fairs
➢ Ombuds orientations
➢ Quick Tips
➢ Library
➢ Training & workshops per request of departments and student groups
➢ Skill development - role playing
➢ Meet/Greet
Ombuds services: EARLY INTERVENTION

➢ Conflict resolution
➢ Shuttle diplomacy
➢ Informal mediation
➢ Consultation & coaching
➢ Information & referral
Ombuds services: SYSTEMIC ISSUES

➢ Identifies trends in the workplace
➢ Works collaboratively with other offices to resolve problems while maintaining neutrality
➢ Makes recommendations to administration
  ❖ To revise policies or consider creating a policy
  ❖ To advise on various training opportunities
How is the “ombuds” different from:

- Human Resource Services
- Employee/Labor Relations – Student Conduct and Community Standards
- Unions
- Office of Equity & Access
- EAP - CAPS/CPO/LGBTQ*Services
- Healthier U/Student Health & Wellness
• **Not** an office of record – does **not** keep any identifying information about individuals or groups who consult with the Ombuds Office. No paper or electronic records or names in an online calendar or aggregate database. May keep notes with a person’s permission only while working with the person and then shreds the information once the case is closed.

• **Not** an office of psychological counseling, but will refer to the EAP for faculty/staff or to CAPs for students, if appropriate.

• **Not** an office that does formal investigations. With permission, may informally investigate a complaint, help a person navigate the system or look into a situation.

• **Not** an advocate of a person, group or department or of Stony Brook as an institution. Instead, is **impartial** or **neutral**, helping people understand all sides of an issue to gain perspective.

• **Not** an office that gives legal advice.

• **Not** an office of compliance, except for being mandated to report Title IX issues.
HOW AN OMBUDS ADDS VALUE TO STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

- Offers a **safe, confidential** and neutral place to hear concerns
- **Empowers** individuals to work through challenges & **explore options**
- **Facilitates** communication and conflict resolution
- **Functions** as a **central** information and referral resource
- Promotes a **civil, inclusive and respectful** climate where there is **fair and equitable** treatment
- Acts **independently** in structure, function and appearance
- Provides **systemic feedback** about trends to administration and makes recommendations for resolution

*Except where required by Title IX and other state and federal laws*
QUICK TIPS
A handy guide to promote positive and respectful interactions with others

Actively Listening
Becoming Resilient
Developing Leadership
Enhancing Communication
Giving & Receiving Feedback
Handling Conflict
Handling Grade Dispute
Keeping an Informal Record

Making an Apology
Preparing for a Difficult Conversation
Responding to Change & Transition
Supporting Teams
Understanding Civility/Incivility
Using Email Etiquette
Writing a Rebuttal
Sometimes all you need is someone to point you in the right direction

**WHAT AN OMBUDS DOES**

- The Ombuds listens with an open mind.
- The Ombuds helps to resolve problems fairly.
- The Ombuds provides a safe place to voice your concerns and explore options for productive conflict management and resolution.
- The Ombuds supports a safe, productive, and civil community.

**WHEN TO USE SERVICES**

- When you need information or assistance in resolving your concern
- When you are unsure of how to proceed or what options are available
- When you feel your concerns have not been adequately addressed through formal channels
- When you don’t know where else to go

**RESOURCES**

Consult the Resources links for additional information. Resources are available for students, faculty, staff, and administrators. REGISTER below for workshops.

Referrals
Workshops
Quick Tips
Library
Websites
OFFICE LOCATIONS:
Please call for an appointment in-person, phone or virtually.
(631) 632-9200

• **West Campus**
  Rm. 137
  Psychology B Building

• **Health Sciences Center**
  By appointment