

N.B.: This is not a conventional report due to this being our single focus of the past 2.5 years.

Syracuse University
Senate Committee on Women’s Concerns
Proposal to Establish an Ombuds Office at Syracuse University

March 23, 2016

Proposal

The Senate Committee on Women’s Concerns proposes the establishment of an Ombuds Office at Syracuse University. Specifically, we recommend to the Senate that the University establishes an Ombuds Office that:

- Operates according to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) [*Code of Ethics*](#), [*Standards of Practice*](#), and [*Best Practices*](#).
- Is available to all members of the University community (faculty, staff, students, and administrators and students).
- Operates outside the Syracuse University’s administrative structure and reports to the Chancellor
- Is staffed by one FTE University Ombudsperson (hereafter referred to as Ombuds) and one FTE assistant.

Catalyst for this proposal

Over the past decade, Syracuse University faculty, staff, and students have increasingly approached the Senate Committee on Women’s Concerns as a “safe space” to talk about issues of grave concern to them, including experiences with, or concerns about,

- Sexual harassment, abuse of power, psychological abuse/bullying in the workplace,
- Inconsistent use of judicial, staff complaint, and other grievance-related policies/procedures at the University, and
- The University’s interpretation and handling of Title IX policies, particularly those concerning sexual assault.

In response, committee members have typically listened and carefully suggested possible avenues, as appropriate, that a person might take to help resolve certain issues. But, sometimes, all we could do was listen, since some issues and concerns were so sensitive that they were beyond our capability as committee members to pursue and we were not the right location for some issues.

Our experience has revealed that people who turn to us for help do so *because they believe there is no other safe place on campus for them to go*. Our experience also points to what we see as a long-standing campus culture that causes many community members—faculty, staff, and students—to believe that their University neither cares about them nor wants to protect them. As a result, many members of our University simply will not turn to the University’s existing support services, even if they are aware that such services exist.

In short, Syracuse University needs an Ombuds Office. An Ombuds Office is the appropriate safe and confidential place for people to turn to for help in sorting out the issues and concerns that are troubling them. All people want to be productive members of our university community, and an Ombuds Office at Syracuse University will go a long way towards empowering our colleagues in distress to find the help they need.

What is an Ombuds Office?

The term “ombudsman” is a Swedish term that means a ‘representative’ who, at the most fundamental level, functions as a designated neutral, independent party of all existing administrative structures, to help people resolve their problems, conflicts, and concerns. Among its many advantages, perhaps the most important one offered by an Ombuds Office is the nature of the office itself. An Ombuds Office functions outside an institution’s administrative structure and provides a confidential, off-the-record, and safe place where people can feel free to bring issues forward for discussion without fear of retaliation or judgment. These functional qualities encourage people to come forward and talk about issues that might not otherwise surface.¹ According to [The Ombuds Blog](#), more than 400 [universities and colleges](#) across the globe have established Ombuds Offices and, of these, 75% are located in the United States. Closer to home, of the fourteen institutions in the Colonial Group,² Syracuse University’s current peer group, Boston University, Lehigh University, Northeastern University, and the University of Miami have established some kind of Ombuds Office. And, of the fifteen Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) institutions,³ which some in our University community might consider another peer group, ten (67%) have established Ombuds Offices.

Specific Functions of the Ombuds

The functions of the Ombuds are to listen with an open mind and to help resolve problems fairly.

What does this mean? What specifically will the Ombuds actually do?

- Listen to the concerns of staff, faculty, students, and administrators who visit the office
- Offer information about university policies and procedures
- Provide informal assistance
- Empower individuals to resolve workplace and academic concerns
- Help people express concerns, examine options for resolving concerns, resolve disputes, manage conflicts, learn more productive ways of communicating
- Assist in resolving interpersonal conflict and facilitate one-on-one and group conversations
- Refer individuals to other offices and services
- Engage in shuttle diplomacy
- De-escalate conflicts and minimize negative consequences for the institution
- Provide an alternative channel for confidential, impartial, independent, and informal dispute resolution services for the entire University community
- Promote accountability, fair treatment, and respectful dialogue
- Help individuals clarify their issues and identify goals
- Help individuals identify and explore a range of options and strategies for resolving their issue
- Coach individuals in written and in-person communication
- Look into problems by gathering data and the perspectives of others
- Provide information on how to make the institution formally aware of a concern or direct people to formal grievance or notice channels when requested
- Identify broader systemic concerns and strategies for addressing them, so that problems may be prevented from escalating or recurring

¹ From the University of Kansas University *Ombuds Office Bi-Annual Report: 2009-2011*. <http://www2.ku.edu/~ombuds/fy11.pdf>

² Colonial Group peers include Boston College, Boston University, Brandeis University, George Washington University, Lehigh University, New York University, Northeastern University, Southern Methodist University, Syracuse University, Tufts University, Tulane University, University of Miami, University of Notre Dame, and Wake Forest University.

³ In addition to Syracuse University, ACC institutions include Boston College, Clemson University, Duke University, Florida State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Louisville, University of Miami, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, University of Notre Dame, University of Pittsburgh, University of Virginia, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Wake Forest University.

- Recommend procedural and policy changes within the University in response to experience acquired in investigating individual cases

Limitations of the Ombuds Office

When does the Ombuds not get involved?

- Not authorized to accept notice of any claims against SU
- Cannot establish, change, or set aside any SU rule or policy
- Cannot override the decisions of any SU administrator
- Does not get involved in formal procedures
- Does not act as a representative of the University in legal procedures

Principles of the Ombuds Office

Ombuds Offices operate according to the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality, confidentiality, and informality set forth in the International Ombudsman Association's (IOA) [Code of Ethics](#) and [Standards of Practice](#) outlined below:

The Principle of Independence

Ombuds are independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization, which means the Ombuds:

- Is independent from other organizational entities.
- Holds no other position within the organization that might compromise independence.
- Exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time, and may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombuds' direct observation.
- Has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.
- Has authority to select office staff and manage office budget and operations.

The Principle of Neutrality and Impartiality

Ombuds, as designated neutrals, remain unaligned, impartial, and do not engage in any situation that could create a conflict of interest, which means the Ombuds:

- Is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures.
- Should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.
- Serves in no additional role within the organization that would compromise the Ombuds' neutrality.
- Should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombuds.
- Strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues.
- Advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.
- Should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.
- Has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.
- Helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.

The Principle of Confidentiality

The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so, unless there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, which means the Ombuds:

- Holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality.
- Considers all communications between the Ombuds and others (made while the Ombuds is serving in that capacity) to be privileged between them, rather than to any party to an issue, and others cannot waive this privilege.
- Does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor's contact with the Ombuds or confidential information communicated to the Ombuds, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombuds may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.
- Pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) in such a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.
- Keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.
- Maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.
- Prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.
- Acts neither as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and does not serve in a position or role designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization—communication made to the Ombuds are not notice to the organization. However, the Ombuds may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

The Principle of Informality

The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention, which means the Ombuds:

- Functions on an informal basis by such means as listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at the Ombuds' discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombuds helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.
- Pursues, as an informal and off-the-record resource, resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.
- Does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.
- Supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombuds is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.
- Does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombuds refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.
- Identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.
- Acts in accordance with the IOA *Code of Ethics* and *Standards of Practice*, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.
- Endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombuds.

How does an Ombuds differ from a Human Resources official?

- The main difference is that an Ombuds serves as an informal and off-record resource for issue resolution, while ER/HR are the official bodies responsible for enforcing official policies and administering formal channels.
- Many issues go unreported to official channels (and thus unresolved) because of fear of retaliation⁴, lack of confidence in official mechanisms, or concern over damage to working relationships.
- The functions of the Ombuds and HR are not competing, but complementary. The great benefit provided by the Ombuds is to serve as an informal, confidential resource to people who do not know what to do and to provide a risk-free channel to people who will not discuss or report their concerns to a supervisor, compliance coordinator, Human Resources, or the EthicsPoint confidential hotline⁵.
- Though SU policies prohibit retaliation, this is not sufficient to assuage people's fear of retaliation for surfacing concerns, nor are we aware of any pro-active actions on the part of the University to prevent retaliation.
- The assurance of confidentiality and the structural neutrality of the Ombuds are essential for making people feel safe to come forward, and this is what empowers the Ombuds to overcome the inherent limitations of existing official channels.
- Therefore, to make confidentiality possible for the Ombuds, the standard practice at other colleges and universities is to explicitly state in the Ombuds Office Charter and elsewhere that the Ombuds is not a channel of notice to the university, nor does the Ombuds keep records for the university or have any managerial functions, thus freeing the university from having imputed knowledge through the Ombuds.
- In contrast, compliance coordinators and Human Resources staff are obligated to report to university administration, to investigate specific allegations of misconduct, to adjudicate grievances, and to protect the interests of the university, regardless of the wishes of the inquirer.
- For these reasons, we propose that the Ombuds should be organizationally distinct from and not subordinate to compliance and HR functions.

Why Syracuse University needs an Ombuds Office

A recent effort to assess employee concerns was the “Diagnostic Employee Survey” conducted in 2013 by Bain & Company, a global management consulting firm retained by the University as part of their “Innovation and Opportunities Assessment” to identify and evaluate potential areas at the University for improvement. In their April 2014 *Syracuse University Diagnostic Report*, Bain consultants reported,

- “The top recommendation of Syracuse employees in their *Diagnostic Employee Survey* was **increased transparency, communication, and collaboration** [Bain’s bolding]. From Bain’s perspective, “**Increased**

⁴ See latest National Business Ethics Survey from 2013 for statistics: “More than one in five workers (21 percent) who reported misconduct said they suffered from retribution as a result, nearly identical to the 22 percent retaliation rate in NBES 2011.”

<https://www.ethics.org/eci/research/eci-research/nbes/nbes-reports/nbes-2013> (accessed 03/10/2016)

⁵ SU has a confidential hotline administered by Audit & Management Advisory Services (AMAS) through EthicsPoint, Inc.

URL: <http://amas.syr.edu/confidential-hotline/>

Note: There is a link to it on the SU Policies page "Prohibition of Retaliation." The link is broken.

Source: *The Organizational Ombudsman* by Charles Howard (2010)

transparency in decision-making and consistency of communication about major decisions would help enhance [a] culture of trust”⁶ [Bain’s bolding].

- “Interviews suggest there are gaps in **required skill and capabilities to perform jobs** in certain job function/areas [Bain’s bolding]. From Bain’s perspective, “Identification of needed skills given future University objectives, and **better matching of capabilities and job functions** against those needs would increase overall productivity and employee satisfaction” [Bain’s bolding].⁷
- “Survey takers point to **lack of professional development** and training opportunities” [Bain’s bolding]. From Bain’s perspective, “**Clear job expectations, incentives for strong performance, and training opportunities** would underpin higher performance” [Bain’s bolding].⁸
- Survey takers also believe **greater recognition of strong performance** and/or fairness in evaluations is **needed”** [Bain’s bolding]. From Bain’s perspective, “**Enhanced feedback mechanisms** for faculty, staff, and students would ensure needed improvements in services are made” [Bain’s bolding].⁹

These findings point to a Syracuse University employee perception that ‘all is not well here’—that the University maintains an overall administrative culture that appears secretive, condescending, and disconnected from any meaningful communication with the rest of the University community.

An event that occurred only two months after Bain’s *Syracuse University Diagnostic Report* essentially confirmed this perception—the sudden closing of the Advocacy Center on June 4, 2014. The Center’s shutdown, only five days after the May 30, 2014 announcement about its impending closure, shocked the Syracuse University community. Syracuse University’s Advocacy Center, founded in 1990 as the *Rape: Advocacy, Prevention and Education (R.A.P.E.) Center*, was the first such center to be established on a college campus in the United States, and served as the model for many other universities that followed Syracuse’s lead and established similar centers. The subsequent responses by University administration to the frustration and anger of students, faculty, and staff protesting the shutdown and, in turn, their reactions to the University’s handling of events surrounding this situation, soon led to a downward spiral of mismanaged conflict resolution that lasted for months. This situation peaked at a November 3, 2014 rally, when student protestors marched to the Crouse-Hinds Hall administration building with a 45-page list of demands¹⁰ drafted by THE General Body¹¹ (a coalition of students, faculty, and staff at Syracuse University created soon after the shutdown of the Advocacy Center) and occupied the building until November 20, 2015. But, not all students, faculty, and staff agreed with THE General Body and its list of demands, and their disagreement with this situation led to pockets of additional conflict across campus.

A review of THE General Body’s *Grievances, Needs and Solutions* demands reveals that this was/is, not a student-specific document, for it covers a wide range of issues and concerns, some of which are specific to students, while others focus on the concerns of faculty, staff, and/or all University members. High on THE General Body’s list of grievances are:

- The lack of transparency in University administrative decision-making;

⁶ *Syracuse University Diagnostic Report*, April 2014, “Operational Excellence: People (culture, capabilities, and talent)”, p. 27. http://syr.edu/news/articles/Innovation_and_Opportunities_Assessment_Report.pdf

⁷ *Syracuse University Diagnostic Report*, April 2014, “Operational Excellence: People (culture, capabilities, and talent)”, p. 27. http://syr.edu/news/articles/Innovation_and_Opportunities_Assessment_Report.pdf

⁸ *Syracuse University Diagnostic Report*, April 2014, “Operational Excellence: People (culture, capabilities, and talent)”, p. 27. http://syr.edu/news/articles/Innovation_and_Opportunities_Assessment_Report.pdf

⁹ *Syracuse University Diagnostic Report*, April 2014, “Operational Excellence: People (culture, capabilities, and talent)”, p. 27. http://syr.edu/news/articles/Innovation_and_Opportunities_Assessment_Report.pdf

¹⁰ <https://thegeneralbodydotorg.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/the-general-body-needs-solutions-and-demands.pdf>

¹¹ <http://thegeneralbody.org/about/>. “THE” is an acronym for “Transparency, Heterogeneity, Equality.”

- The hostile environment for students, faculty, and staff with disabilities;
- The unsupportive and unsafe environment for students with marginalized identities; and
- Concerns that “when students have grievances, they do not have a safe, anonymous place to go to resolve or address these.”¹²

However, if we step back from reviewing the document’s specific grievances, needs, and solutions and consider, instead, the broader message that emerges, we begin to see that THE General Body essentially created a spontaneous campus-wide “safe space” for students, faculty, and staff to voice all kinds of pent up grievances about the University. This is why their list of demands covers such a wide range of topics involving all members of the University community. In short, during those few short months of campus unrest, from June 2014 to November 2014, THE General Body served as a much-needed “safe space” for the entire campus community, and became ‘the place’ to voice concerns (in no uncertain terms), not only about University administration’s handling of the community’s response to the unexpected closing of the Advocacy Center, but also about a whole range of seemingly unrelated issues that people wanted University administration to hear from them.

The events of Fall 2014 not only led the University community into an unhealthy situation, but also served as symptoms of deeper issues and concerns that are roiling throughout our University—not publically voiced, but personally expressed through countless under-the-radar “water cooler” conversations about the problems on campus. This all adds up to a campus culture that inspires individuals to simply give up caring about the University, lose energy about their work, and look for ways to get out of their predicaments, if not the University altogether.

On the heels of all the campus unrest sparked by the Advocacy Center’s closure, another voice emerged—Syracuse University’s *Graduate Student Organization* (GSO), which drafted GSO Senate Resolution 15.12, *Definition and Proposal for an Ombuds Office*.¹³ This resolution, which appears to be in response to University administration’s post sit-in promise ‘to explore additional avenues for concerns to be addressed,’ observes:

- “Conflict and lack of information inevitably arise in a complex organization and it is imperative to operations and morale that conflicts be resolved;”
- “Syracuse University lacks an office that provides informal guidance on grievance procedures, and grievance procedures are often hard to navigate for students, faculty, and staff;”
- “People often need a confidential sounding board before they can make an informed decision about how to proceed in a matter;”
- “A confidential and informal conflict management resource can lower the threshold for seeking help disputes and other matters of concern, thus allowing issues to be solved before they become intractable;”
- “An ombudsperson office can provide an ‘off the record’ and neutral resource for students, faculty, and staff to be informed about their rights and the workings of grievance procedures, as well as serving as a center for informal resolution;”
- “According to the International Ombudsman Association, ‘The primary duties of an organizational ombudsman are (1) to work with individuals and groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution;’ ”
- “The International Ombudsman Association further states that an ombudsperson office must operate under the key principles of confidentiality, neutrality, independence, and informality;”

¹² *THE General Body Grievances, Needs and Solutions* (11/9/2014), 1.4, p. 7.

¹³ [15.12 Senate Resolution – Definition and Proposal of a Plan for an Ombuds Office](#)

- “Students have access to resources, such as Office of Student Assistance, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Student Grievance Process, that serve functions similar to an ombudsperson office, but none can preserve boundaries of confidentiality, neutrality, independence, and informality that define the operations of an ombudsperson office, and an ombudsperson office can supplement these resources;”
- “Staff and Faculty do not have access to an independent, confidential, neutral, and informal resource” and “there is widespread need for such a resource;”
- “Power differences between individuals in conflict can make it difficult for people to confront issues, including when there are problematic patterns that do not rise to the level of formal grievances;”
- “The core principles of independence, confidentiality, neutrality, and informality create a safe space for individuals to come forward with questions and matters of concern and gain insight on how best to resolve these issues;”
- “Several historical allies of the GSO have worked on proposals for an ombudsperson, including the University Senate; and be it “Resolved, that the GSO Senate join with the Student Association, University Senate, and other constituencies in the University community to develop a plan for an ombudsperson office involving the above named characteristics.”

About the same time that the GSO was drafting Senate Resolution 15.12 to create an Ombuds Office, the *Student- and Faculty-Centered Operations Working Group* (Working Group 6) of the *Fast Forward Syracuse Academic Strategic Plan*, submitted their *Final Report* (February 13, 2015), in which working group members included the following recommendation—Improve faculty quality of life, morale, and campus climate. Their justification for this recommendation was:

“There are large pockets of poor morale among faculty and staff due to: widely differing resources and compensation among schools and colleges; poor relations between faculty and administration; a concern that university administrators are increasingly treating the university as a legal and business entity rather than as an academic institution built upon by a community of individual people; and inconsistency between Syracuse’s claims of being a research university—with research university requirements for achievement—while not providing the concomitant resources and incentives.”¹⁴

And, one of the seven actions recommended by the Working Group to help achieve this recommendation was to: “Develop an Ombudsperson position to deal with personnel and other problems before they get to the legal level. This often saves money and improves morale at other universities, and provides a neutral place for resolving numerous inter-personal problems” and to “Hire and Ombudsperson.”¹⁵

Clearly, our students, faculty, and staff see a great need for establishing an Ombuds Office at Syracuse University. However, of the several reasons for creating such an office collectively presented by the GSO in their Senate Resolution 15.12, *Definition and Proposal for an Ombuds Office* and the *Student- and Faculty-Centered Operations* in their final report, one key reason that often propels an institution establish an Ombuds Office is the following:

Organizational ombuds programs in the US usually have been created to respond to particular societal needs: bureaucratic and inflexible government, student riots and **campus unrest**, and business scandals **demonstrating a failure of corporate responsibility and governance**.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Final Report, Working Group 6—Student and Faculty Centered Operations* (Feb. 13, 2015), p. 7.

¹⁵ *Final Report, Working Group 6—Student and Faculty Centered Operations* (Feb. 13, 2015), p. 7.

¹⁶ Charles L. Howard, *The Organizational Ombudsman: Origins, Roles, and Operations, A Legal Guide*. Chicago, ILL: ABA [American Bar Association] Publishing, 2010, p. 79.

Committee's plan of work

The Women's Concerns committee prepared this proposal based on the following plan of work:

Summer 2013 Gathered initial information based on an initial review of the 400+ colleges and universities listed in *The Ombuds Blog*¹⁷ Directory of Ombuds Offices¹⁸ as having some kind of Ombuds Office

Fall 2013 Based on this initial review, the committee selected for closer review the 20 U.S. colleges and universities that had established their Ombuds offices according to the committee's primary criterion—that all members of the Syracuse University community—undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and faculty—are eligible to use the Ombuds Office. At that time, the following institutions met that criterion, and the committee selected them for closer review:

Arizona State University	Stanford University
Auburn University	Stony Brook University
Binghamton University	University of California-Los Angeles
Columbia University	University of Cincinnati
Cornell University	University of Kansas
Harvard University	University of Maryland
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Oregon State University	University of Virginia
Princeton University	University of Washington
Rochester Institute of Technology	Washington State University

December 2014 The committee contacted the Ombuds at each of the twenty institutions, and asked if he or she would be willing to respond, either by telephone or in writing, to the following set of questions:

A. Re: institutional setting/organizational aspects of the Ombuds program/office:

1. What is the process for selecting and appointing the Ombuds?
2. Who appoints the Ombuds?
3. Who does the Ombuds report to?
4. How long is the Ombuds term of service?
5. What level/ kind of staffing does your Ombuds office have?
6. What University unit/s fund/s the personnel and day-to-day operations of the Ombuds office?
7. Where is your Ombuds office physically located?

B. How does your Ombuds office accomplish its responsibilities to maintain:

1. Independence in structure, function, and position within the University

¹⁷ *The Ombuds Blog: News and Information For and About Organizational Ombuds*, <http://ombuds-blog.blogspot.com/>.

¹⁸ *The Ombuds Blog*, Colleges and Universities, Directory of Ombuds Offices, <http://ombuds-blog.blogspot.com/p/higher-ed.html>.

2. Neutrality and impartiality
3. Confidentiality
4. Informality

C. Do you have any challenges, issues, and/or concerns you are willing to share with us?

D. Do you have any advice for us regarding establishing an Ombuds office?

The committee received 16 responses (Auburn, Princeton, Stony Brook, and North Carolina-Chapel Hill did not respond), which included telephone conversations of one-hour (or more in some cases) with 12 of the institutions' Ombuds and written responses from the Ombuds at the remaining 4 institutions. See Appendix A for a summary of the Ombuds' responses.

March 2015 The committee established a Ombuds Subcommittee, comprised of one representative each from the Senate Committee on Women's Concerns, the Senate Committee on Services to Faculty and Staff, and the Graduate Student Organization (GSO), to prepare a draft proposal for review and editing by the two committees and the GSO.

Summer 2015 The Ombuds Subcommittee:

- Reviewed in May 2015 the policies identified on the [Syracuse University Policies](#) website, which contains 252 unique policies of the 352 policies listed. Of these, the following offered some kind of reference to informal and/or/formal dispute resolution processes/and/or sanctions for violation (See Appendix B Review of Syracuse University Polices and Procedures Concerning Dispute Resolution)
- Reviewed in May 2015 existing policies and procedures concerning dispute resolution services and resources available to student (See Appendix B, *Review of Syracuse University Polices and Procedures Concerning Dispute Resolution*)

September 2015 The Ombuds Subcommittee prepared a draft proposal for review during AY 2015-2016 by the Senate Committee on Women's Concerns, the Senate Committee on Services to Faculty and Staff, the Graduate Student Organization, and other interested groups.

Right now, many students, faculty, and staff at Syracuse University are suffering from some kind of distress that affects how well they can perform as students or employees. Causes of distress may include abusive behavior by managers, administrators, or teachers; bullying by peers or other members of the University community; mishandled grievance and/or other University policies and/or procedures; personal and/or family-related health issues; child- and/or eldercare pressures; impending organizational changes (actual or rumored) at the University; and/or even the physical environment of a workplace or classroom itself. Others, while not trying to cope with specific kinds of distress, may be experiencing the overall sense of malaise that many are feeling—difficult to describe, yet clearly felt. Currently the university is asking for community members to participate in a Climate Survey, pointing to a concern about these very issues.

Conclusion

Syracuse University needs an Ombuds Office. Institutions going through change need this sort of support. Bain consultants, THE General Body, the Graduate Student Organization, and the Fast Forward Syracuse *Student and Faculty Centered Operations* all touch on the benefits of establishing an Ombuds Office at Syracuse University. They also confirm the overall reason for the Senate Committee on Women's Concerns to submit this proposal—that we are working and studying in a University administrative culture that causes the University community to feel a general sense of distrust and an overall lack of confidence in the people who manage our University. This is serious, because this mistrust and lack of confidence insinuates that many people in our community are in distress

and need an administratively independent and confidential place to go for help to sort out their problems and provides a personal strategy for dealing with them.

It is clear that many people at the University feel that there is no safe place on campus where they can go to talk about their problems. **This is what an Ombuds Office can do for our University.** It can offer each person who comes to the office, whether student, faculty, or staff, or administrator, a safe, informal, confidential space to talk about their issues and concerns. Syracuse University is a complex and decentralized organization with a variety of resources to help people, but these resources are often confusing and hard to find. An Ombuds Office wants to work in partnership with University administration, wants to serve as a complement to existing services on campus, and wants to enhance their use and effectiveness by sensitively helping people in trouble find the best possible resource available at the University to help them.

In closing, it is heartening that Syracuse Fast Forward¹⁹ recognizes the importance of nourishing the overall well-being of its students, faculty, and staff, evidenced by such statements as,

“We also recognize that true undergraduate excellence can only be achieved when attention is paid to the ‘whole student.’ We will do so by working collaboratively to address campus culture and nurture the personal, professional, and social development of all students, and to create the conditions that support excellent teaching, learning, retention, and success.”

Fast Forward Syracuse, *Academic Strategic Plan: Trajectory to Excellence*, “The Student Experience: Provide all students with a world-class learning experience that prepares them for future success,” (June 2015 draft, p. 7)

“Goal: *Nourish the whole student so support academic, social, and emotional well-being*

Academic success requires that all students have access to a holistic network of supports that facilitate academic social, and emotional well-being, and lay the groundwork for a successful transition from collect to career.”

Fast Forward Syracuse, *Academic Strategic Plan: Trajectory to Excellence*, one of the goals outlined in the “The Student Experience: Provide all students with a world-class learning experience that prepares them for future success,” (June 2015 draft, p. 9)

“To address student needs beyond the academic realm, we will work to better coordinate all student services both organizationally and physically, and assure full accessibility. Research and data support a strong link between mental and behavioral health issues and students’ ability to learn and feel a part of their campus community.”

Fast Forward Syracuse, *Academic Strategic Plan: Trajectory to Excellence*, one of the goals outlined in the “The Student Experience: provide all students with a world-class learning experience that prepares them for future success,” (June 2015 draft, p. 9)

“We are deeply committed to maintaining a campus community where all feel valued and respected...Every member of the campus community will be accountable for advancing a campus culture characterized by mutual respect, honesty, ethical and academic integrity, and safety for all.”

Fast Forward Syracuse, *Academic Strategic Plan: Trajectory to Excellence*, one of the goals outlined in the “The Student Experience: provide all students with a world-class learning experience that prepares them for future success,” (June 2015 draft, p. 9)

“Academic and support staff, both on campus and at satellite locations—many of whom are the first line of contact for students seeking assistance—play a crucial role in advancing the goals of the plan and

¹⁹ From the Fast Forward website: “Fast Forward Syracuse is a university-wide initiative that involves three inter-related components: an Academic Strategic Plan laying out a common vision for Syracuse and clear academic priorities needed to achieve that vision, a Campus Master Plan to provide a framework for our University’s infrastructure needs, and an Operational Excellence program to help support and fund these investments and the pursuit of our overall objectives.” fastforward.syr.edu.

assuring the success of our students. We aim to be recognized as a model employer...We must ensure that in every capacity, our operations are efficient and effective, and that employees at every level recognize their role in advancing our mission and sustaining a thriving supportive campus community for all."

Fast Forward Syracuse, *Academic Strategic Plan: Trajectory to Excellence*, "One University: Galvanize Institution-wide excellence," (June 2015 draft, p. 19)

"Syracuse is committed to maintaining a workplace environment that is supportive, challenging, responsive, and rewarding for all employees. Toward that end, we must ensure that they have opportunities for professional development and for the advancement, with appropriate training, to higher levels of responsibility...In doing so, we strengthen morale, elevate quality and productivity, inspire dedication, and enhance retention of talented employees...Whether they work on the main campus or at a satellite center in Florence or Beijing, all members of our campus community must feel valued and supported."

Fast Forward Syracuse, *Academic Strategic Plan: Trajectory to Excellence*, "One University: Galvanize Institution-wide excellence," Goal: Advance excellence in every capacity to fuel staff and faculty success. (June 2015 draft, p. 19)

Indeed, as the events of Fall 2014 and their aftermath have revealed, there is no greater need for, and no better time, for Syracuse University to establish an Ombuds Office.

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