

RECOMMENDATION FROM STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN FACULTY
December 2014
Colorado State University
Position Description
Academic Faculty Ombuds

Position Summary

The Academic Faculty Ombuds is a designated neutral or impartial dispute resolution practitioner whose major function is to provide confidential and informal assistance to university academic faculty, administrative professional and classified staff, administrators, and student employees in matters of conflict with academic faculty. This position may encounter extremely sensitive and difficult issues and has the authority to engage anyone in an effort to foster fair and just practices at Colorado State University (CSU). The individual in this position has the support of the President, Provost, and their administration in performing duties.

Serving as a designated neutral party, the Academic Faculty Ombuds is neither an advocate for any individual or the institution, but rather is an advocate for fairness, who acts as a source of information and referral, and takes an active role in assisting in the resolution of concerns and critical situations. In considering any given instance or concern, the Academic Faculty Ombuds should consider all points of view of all parties involved or possibly impacted. The Academic Faculty Ombuds position supplements, but does not replace, the University's existing resources for formal conflict resolution (e.g., committees that hear matters via shared governance, Office of the Ombuds, University Grievance Office, Office of Equal Opportunity, Human Resources, Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services, etc.).

The Academic Faculty Ombuds is a half-time position independent of existing administrative structures, reports to the Provost, and does not accept legal documents on behalf of the university.

Responsibilities

Dispute Resolution, Consultation, and Referral - 75%

- Provide impartial and confidential conflict resolution services to CSU faculty and staff employees who are aggrieved or concerned about an issue with an academic faculty member.
- Assist inquirers in obtaining and providing relevant information regarding University policies and procedures.
- Assist inquirers in clarifying issues and generating options for resolution.
- Facilitate the inquirer's assessment of the pros and cons of possible options.
- Obtain the inquirer's agreement and permission before proceeding when action requires inquiring of and interacting with others on campus.
- If necessary, and while maintaining confidentiality, engage in informal information gathering

in order to better understand an issue from all perspectives.

- Consult with vice provosts, deans, directors, supervisors, and other appropriate individuals to develop cooperative strategies for resolving concerns and complaints.
- With the inquirer's permission, consult with all parties to clarify and analyze problems, focus discussions, and develop a mutually-satisfactory process for resolution.
- When appropriate, facilitate group meetings, use shuttle diplomacy (e.g. serve as intermediary in discussions), or negotiation skills to facilitate communication among parties in conflict.
- Encourage flexible administrative practices to maximize the institution's ability to fairly meet the needs of all members of the campus community.
- Maintain a positive liaison relationship with shared governance committees, Office of the Ombuds, University Grievance Office, Office of Equal Opportunity, Human Resources, Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services, etc. When possible and appropriate, provide inquirer with referrals to these offices or other resources.
- Follow up with inquirers as appropriate to determine outcome and further need of assistance.

Other - 25%

- Serve as a campus resource for administrators in formulating or modifying policy and procedures, and raising issues that might surface as a result of a gap between the stated goals of the institution and actual practice.
- Provide early warning of new areas of organizational concern, upward feedback, critical analysis of systemic needs for improvement, and make system change recommendations.
- Advise other offices that provide training and, on occasion, participate in training programs for the campus community in dispute/conflict resolution, negotiation skills and theory, respectful interactions, and related topics.
- Ensure that the integrity of the position is maintained through independence, fair process, neutrality, impartiality, confidentiality, and timely attention to the resolution of issues while treating people with dignity and respect.
- Prepare annual report, and other updates as requested from the Provost or other administrators, in aggregate (non-identifying) manner that tracks volume and types of matters.
- Maintain confidential records and reports.

Background, Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Current or retired tenured CSU faculty member with extensive dispute resolution and higher education experience.
- Outstanding communication skills and ability to communicate effectively with individuals at all levels of the organization as well as with people of all cultures, employee types, education/experience level, and diverse backgrounds.

- Excellent problem-solving skills and ability to gather information, analyze it and, as necessary, help the inquirer develop appropriate options and actions.
- Ability to analyze how decisions might impact the inquirer, as well as other stakeholders and the university.
- Ability to facilitate resolution of conflict between parties. It is important that the Academic Faculty Ombuds have a thorough understanding of what leads to conflict, the nature of conflict, and methods of resolution. The skills used to assist inquirers to resolve their conflicts include:
 - helping people learn how to deal with the matter directly if they wish to do so;
 - serving as a facilitator between the parties via shuttle diplomacy;
 - informally bringing the parties together and serving as a facilitator or mediator; approaching the conflict issue generically within the larger environment (especially when the inquirer is afraid of retaliation); and
 - influencing systems change which could obviate the individual problem.
- Knowledge or ability to obtain knowledge of CSU structure, culture, policies, and practices for all employee types.
- Excellent networking skills, ability to understand and participate in collaboration with others, and be able to establish and maintain broad contacts throughout the organization.
- Ability to maintain a professional demeanor, collegiality, and professionalism.
- Strong presentation skills and ability to organize and communicate information to groups of varying size and hierarchical levels in the organization.
- Hold the reputation of integrity and for dealing fairly, effectively, and in a timely fashion with all constituents.
- Ability to hold information confidentially and share information appropriately.
- Understanding that this position may involve extremely sensitive and difficult issues and understanding that this position may, on occasion, engage even the highest levels of the administration in an effort to foster fair and just practices.