

UTMB HANDBOOK OF OPERATING PROCEDURES

Section 5 Faculty	08/01/08 -Originated
Subject 5.3 Faculty Policies	08/05/10 -Reviewed w/ changes -Reviewed w/o changes
Policy 5.3.14 Faculty Ombudsperson Policy	Council of Deans -Author

Faculty Ombudsperson Policy

Definitions

Ombudsperson is a dispute resolution practitioner whose major function is to provide confidential and informal assistance to the faculty. The Ombudsperson facilitates early and open communication, encourages negotiation and assists in the resolution of conflict through available institutional channels.

Policy

It is the policy of The University of Texas Medical Branch to provide an independent Ombudsperson to faculty members and administrators with a faculty appointment as a designated neutral party who will serve as an informal off-the-record and confidential resource for dispute resolution.

Some examples of conflicts, complaints, and disputes that may be addressed by the Ombudsperson include but are not limited to:

- Decisions or actions affecting groups or individuals;
- Interpersonal disputes;
- Policies and procedures;
- Employment related disputes;
- Administrative issues.

Role and Responsibilities

The role of the Ombudsperson is to facilitate early and open communication, encourage negotiation, and assist in the resolution of conflict through available institutional channels.

An Ombudsperson:

- Is a highly respected Non-UTMB tenured faculty member;
- Is neutral and impartial;
- Adheres to the ethical principles of the University and College Ombudsman Association (see Ombudsman Association Ethical Principles)
- Is an advocate for fairness who owes allegiance to the whole institutional community, and not to an individual or to a certain segment of the institution
- Is trained in methods of conflict resolution and problem-solving techniques, and

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Role and Responsibilities, continued

- Treats all information received as confidential; does not keep permanent notes, documents or case records; destroys any records at the completion of the intervention. created or received

Conflict Resolution Responsibilities

- Adheres to the ethical principles of the [University and College Ombudsman Association](#);
- Assists in clarifying issues that have created conflict or concern;
- Researches, and analyzes concerns and means for resolving issues;
- Frames issues and explores possible remedies;
- Provides information regarding available options and resources;
- Facilitates informal meetings and mutual resolution of concerns;
- Maintains confidentiality and impartiality;
- Develops and promotes positive, informal problem solving methods;
- Provides follow-up;
- Educates the UTMB community by promoting awareness of services and ongoing issues; and
- Makes recommendations for the continuous improvement of informal early conflict resolution.

Administrative Responsibilities

The Ombudsperson:

- Publishes annual statistical reports;
- Recommends corrections to policies and procedures at any institutional level.

Exception to Responsibilities

The Ombudsperson does not:

- Intervene in any formal disciplinary process or termination;
- Advocate for any party;
- Participate in the conclusive stage of the conflict management process;
- Make administrative decisions for the institution;
- Determine guilt or innocence;

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Exception to Responsibilities, continued

- Deal with complaints of sexual harassment;
- Deal with issues involving alleged violation of state or federal law;
- Assist when legal counsel is engaged;
- Receive official notice for the institution about issues;
- Become involved in legal issues.

Selection of the Ombudsperson

The Ombudsperson holds an autonomous position, reporting solely to the President. The appointment is for one year, renewable annually at the discretion of the President.

1. Using position description criteria, the Ombudsperson Selection /Review Committee evaluates candidates for the position of Ombudsperson (see [Ombudsperson Position Description](#)).
2. Members of the committee recommend to the President a slate of top candidates, ranked in order of preference.
3. The President makes his/her selection from the list of recommended candidates.

Ombudsperson Selection/Review Committee is comprised of:

- Chair of the Faculty Senate
- Chair of the Faculty Grievance Committee
- An active faculty Ombudsperson or ethics officer from another institution
- A member of the public sector, and
- A faculty administrator – either a department chair or division head.