

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO



**OMBUDS SERVICES
FOR STAFF**

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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A Letter from the Staff Ombuds

Dear UNM Affiliate,

2020. What a year.

We are happy to share this 2020 Annual Report which describes the services of our office and some of our 2020 accomplishments during an uncharted year.

Some highlights include providing quality individual visits for UNM staff, faculty supervising staff, and their teams. While we had initiated Zoom visits for branch campuses in 2018, in March of 2020, we successfully adapted Zoom visits to serve all employees through the COVID-19 pandemic. The positive and far-reaching impact of our services were not negatively impacted by this Zoom model.¹

Ombuds Day on Oct. 8th was an unconventional success. Instead of celebrating Ombuds Day in-person this year, we sent out over 200 flyers to the UNM community, inviting people to schedule a restorative ombuds visit.² Visitors often refer to Ombuds Services as an oasis that gives them safety and support to take a deep breath, reflect, process, and plan for a better future. Many Lobos took us up on the offer, and scheduled 1:1 restorative visits.

We had some significant changes to our staffing this year. Jon Lee accepted an offer to serve as Associate Ombuds for UCSF in January. Congratulations, Jon! Associate Ombuds Anne Lightsey's position was .75FTE until November. Anne and I worked hard to serve UNM staff and faculty supervising staff through the pandemic. At the end of the year, I was able to increase Anne Lightsey's position to fulltime.

Peter Armijo, UNM School of Law ADR Extern to Ombuds Services was selected to present his research paper and the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Annual Conference. Peter was also awarded the coveted ADR scholarship. Sadly, Peter was not able to give his presentation at the conference due to COVID. Anne Lightsey, Associate Ombuds, and I enjoyed watching Peter's UNM School of Law graduation ceremony online in May. Congratulations, Peter! Also, many thanks to Dana Ball who provided us with significant support over the course of her Summer Internship. We did not have a student or community volunteer in the Fall.

We hope that you will find this report interesting and useful. We encourage you to contact us with your thoughts, questions, and suggestions.

Best wishes,

JoEllen Ransom, Staff Ombuds

¹ See our [Anonymous Feedback Survey](#) results and [comments from Anonymous Feedback Survey](#)

² See our [2020 Ombuds Day Flyer](#)

Ombuds Role and Who We Serve

Our ombuds role is to engage the campus community in dialogue toward the goal of building and supporting respect, civility, shared perspective, collaboration, self-awareness, and justice in our communities and professional relationships.

We support all employees who access our services in their efforts to address workplace goals or concerns. We serve executives, managers, and leaders at all levels of UNM staff and faculty supervising staff. As skilled neutrals who provide confidential, independent, and informal services, we support your leadership in collaborative problem-solving efforts.

Why Visit Ombuds Services?

There is no wrong time and no wrong reason to contact Ombuds Services. People often schedule a visit to reflect, problem-solve and strategize about:

- Interpersonal relationships between peers, colleagues, supervisors and supervisees, and others whom you encounter while working for UNM.
- Those who are experiencing change in mission, budget, leadership, organizational structure, or job description.
- Those who are subject of a complaint or complaints.
- Those who are experiencing loss.
- Identity-based harassment, discrimination, abuse of power, bullying, inequitable working environments, inappropriate relationships, unwanted sexual attention.
- Those who want to self-reflection about bias, and their personal journey to promote equity.
- Those who seek more robust communication in the workplace.
- Those who are envisioning change.

Individuals and/or teams who contact Ombuds Services for Staff receive confidential, neutral, and informal support provided by a Certified Organization Ombuds Practitioner (CO-OP®).

“My conversation with [the ombuds] was incredibly helpful, as always! I felt heard and through [the ombudsperson’s] thoughtful listening and prompts, I left with greater clarity and a concrete plan to address a thorny issue. Thank you!”

The Year in Review

THE YEAR OF COVID-19

In 2020, we watched the visits become increasingly intense, and involved some extraordinary health, safety, and social justice concerns.

As Prof. Mary Rowe, Ombuds at MIT, wrote:

“COVID-19 and the murder of Mr. George Floyd have illuminated—like a lightning storm—the need for constituents in every job classification to find safe, accessible, fair and credible ways to express concerns within their organizations and seek help. We need effective conflict management systems in organizations, and every major system needs at least one safe, independent, neutral, confidential professional as an access point.”³

UNM has such an access point in Ombuds Services.

The issues Dr. Rowe highlights below are consistent with the concerns we heard:

- *Being required to work when family demands are impossible to meet; dealing with anger, fear, and grief from family and friends;*
- *Very sharp increases in emotional and mental health needs throughout the organization, from lower-level employees and students to senior leaders;*
- *Profound compassion fatigue and burnout on the part of human services professionals in organizations, including health care staff, human resources staff, and employee assistance program (EAP) staff;*
- *Inequities of every sort ... with racism, sexism, and xenophobia all sharply on the rise*

Many constituents at all levels, and especially employees, managers and students of color, have been afraid to seek help, and turn to ombuds offices—often in desperation. Ombuds help their employers to deal with risk by helping to identify and assess and communicate about concerns. At the same time, ombuds help each of their constituents to deal with the risk of seeking help by being neutral, confidential and independent resources who keep no case records.

³ These are excerpts. [Link to the full article](#)

Trending Visitor Concerns During COVID-19

Below are some common issues heard by UNM Ombuds Services since 03/2020:

Isolation

Employees feeling isolated from their supervisors and teams.

- Left out of conversations that lead to important decisions.
- Struggling to juggle responsibilities at home and work during COVID

Safety

People feeling unsafe

- On campus due to the virus and failures to follow schedules and COVID protocol.
- Because they are asked (or fear being asked) to return to campus too soon
- Because of budget cuts and potential job cuts
- Because of unsustainable extra assignments due to positions not being filed.

Unappreciated

Lack of positive feedback, appreciation, and pay/title for extra work assigned

- Often tied to extra work due to unfilled positions which can impact quality of work

Social Justice

Concerns about bias and systemic racism/sexism – the role of self and others.

- Interest in self-reflection about “White Fragility” and “How to be an Anti-Racist”

Change Management

Due to COVID-19, physical distancing, virus control, budget impact, new educational and work approaches.

- Wondering how and how long the virus will impact us.

*“Always so helpful for re-framing and re-directing when I am feeling overwhelmed.
[The ombuds] is such an amazing presence and support and she has helped me so much.
I could not be happier with everything I have learned.”*

One way to think of 2020.⁴ Looking at and dealing with what's below the surface is often how people utilize Ombuds Services.



"I very much enjoyed my visit today.

It is nice to process out loud, to hear back how what I am saying is interpreted by another, and to have that time to connect with another, particularly in these COVID times."

⁴ "Illusory Icebergs" originally seen in UNM Advance's "ADVANCE: Perseverance is not just for Mars" email on 3/11/21

VISITS AND FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS

Each UNM employee who interacted with Ombuds Services represents a commitment to engaging appropriate resources for informal problem-solving to move forward constructively.

Ombuds Services for Staff provided over **450 hours** of direct service through **286** individual Visits, and **9** Facilitated Conversations.⁵

With **55%** of our staff, we managed **72%** of the case load, compared to 2019.

“There is no possible way that I can find the words to describe how meaningful this session was for me. Thank you!!!!”

“This is a great service and benefit for staff. It was an excellent, safe and helpful way of processing the issue at hand that provided a different approach to the issue. Thank you!”

VISITORS CONCERNS AND GOALS

On the following pages, see what topics visitors addressed during their visits with Ombuds Services.

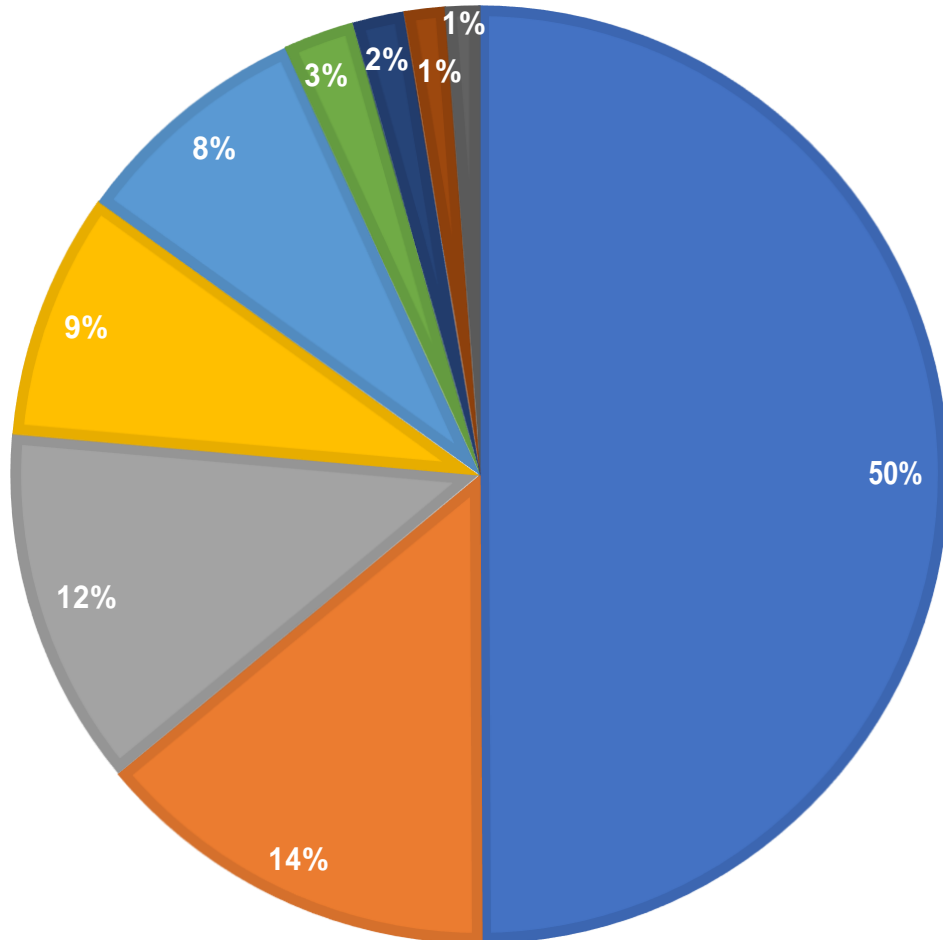
See the [International Ombudsman Association’s \(IOA\) Uniform Reporting Categories \(URC\)](#) for a descriptions of all the categories.

See [Appendix D](#) for a complete list of how many Ombuds visitors addressed each sub-category.

⁵ Formerly call Ombuds Mediation


VISITORS ADDRESSED THE FOLLOWING CONCERNS & GOALS



- Evaluative Relationships
- Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related
- Peer and Colleague Relationships
- Safety, Health, and Physical Environment
- Career Progression and Development
- Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance
- Compensation and Benefits
- Service/Administrative Issues
- Values, Ethics, and Standards





ANONYMOUS VISITOR FEEDBACK SURVEY

Visitors to Ombuds Services may complete a feedback survey at the conclusion of their visits. Feedback is collected anonymously. In 2020, we had **66%** response rate.

1. Did you feel the Visit process was fair and impartial?			
			Response Percent
1	Yes		100.00%
2	No		0.00%
3	Other (please specify):		0.00%





2. Did you feel heard during your Visit with Ombuds Services?			
			Response Percent
1	Yes		99.91%
2	No		0.00%
3	Other (please specify):		.09%
Other (please specify): (1)			1
1	[Ombuds] is the *best* listener.		

3. Would you recommend Ombuds Services to others?			
			Response Percent
1	Yes		98.00%
2	No		0.00%
3	Other (please specify):		2.00%
Other (please specify): (3) [see below for responses]			

3. Would you recommend Ombuds Services to others?

		Response Percent
1	I have recommended the Ombuds Services to many!	
2	I think folks don't realize how broad their support is. It's not just for a conflict, but can also be incredibly useful for individuals to use for their own issues.	
3	I always do!	

4. Which standards of practice are important to you in consulting with Ombuds Services? Please check all that apply.

		Response Percent
1	CONFIDENTIALITY: 	93.33%
2	NEUTRALITY and IMPARTIALITY: 	90.67%
3	INFORMALITY: 	77.33%
4	INDEPENDENCE: 	80.00%

For the 5th year in a row, 100% of visitor stated that:

- The process seemed fair and impartial
- They felt heard
- They would recommend Ombuds Services to others

100%



VISITOR TESTIMONIALS

The 5th question on the survey offers the visitor the opportunity to include additional comments and suggestions. Please see [Appendix E](#) for all of the responses.

Here are a small sample:

- Ombuds is such a wonderful UNM organization. Probably half of my staff has used them at one time or another. Through workshops, groups mediation, and individual sessions, they have helped us grow into a more functional and humane organization.
- My experience was great! [The ombuds] helped me see the situation clearly and chart a path forward.

COLLABORATING WITH UNM AGENCIES

We met regularly with Staff Council, SMART Committee, OEO, EOD, Wellness Alliance, and Women's Resource Center to talk about practices, trends, resources, and collaborative opportunities for serving the UNM community. Due to changes to Title IX regulations, nationally, we worked diligently with the IOA and UNM agencies to establish the appropriate role for Ombuds Services as an informal and confidential service for staff and faculty supervising staff.

With the retirement of the Faculty Ombuds, we proposed the consolidation of the Staff, Faculty and Graduate Student Ombuds under JoEllen's supervision in order to promote collaboration among ombuds, and consistent compliance with IOA standards of practice at UNM going forward. The offices remain siloed.

We continued collaborating with UNM Continuing Education to add the popular option of tuition remission for the *Crucial Conversations* course which Anne Lightsey provided 1 time in person this year in person and then 10 times virtually.

We presented to a Staff Council "Lunch and Learn" on the topic of Trending Concerns in 2020.

We developed new outreach [flyers](#) encouraging UNM staff and faculty supervising staff to access our services during these challenging, often exhausting, times.

"I think [the ombuds] is a great mediator - she serves as a great resource in and out of the formal process, making what can be very uncomfortable into a more safe environment."

COLLABORATING WITH STATE AGENCIES

Mediated for Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court Mediation Program, and state agencies as requested by NM State Risk Management Division, ADR Bureau (ADR Bureau).

Provided ADR Bureau and UNM Chief of Staff quarterly reports of our presentations, visits and facilitated conversations.

Hosted a session for the NM ADR Symposium online in October 2020.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDED

We provided over **45** professional development workshops, presentations and learning opportunities, reaching more than **500** members of the UNM community over **65** hours. For a full list, please see [Appendix F](#) as well as our [website](#).

"I am happy and thankful that UNM offers this resource. It was so helpful and I learned some new things while here. I plan to return if I should have any other issue/concern arise."

OFFICE STAFF AND INTERNS

STAFF: Throughout 2020, office consisted of JoEllen Ransom, Staff Ombuds; Anne Lightsey, Associate Ombuds.

STUDENTS: During Spring semester, UNM Law School ADR Extern Peter Armijo scheduled visits, managed data, and earned a coveted IOA scholarship to present his research on confidentiality at the IOA conference in April. Sadly, the international conference was canceled due to the pandemic. We attended his graduation ceremony in May, and we are proud to know Peter Armijo.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS: We enjoyed working with volunteer intern, Dana Ball. Also, we appreciate the support that we received from the following Skill Development Lunch Workshop coaches, Rachel Yarrington, Arianna Trott, Laura Bassein, Shannon Driscoll, and Dana Ball. Thank you!

Together, we provided services that helped employees to improve the workplaces that support UNM students, and the values of the university.

Appendix

APPENDIX A: UNM POLICY 3220 – OMBUDS SERVICES FOR STAFF

1. GENERAL

Ombuds Services for Staff (Ombuds Services) is an independent, neutral, confidential, and informal resource that promotes constructive conflict management on campus. Ombuds Services provides informal dispute resolution and collaborative problem-solving processes, free of charge, to all staff, their supervisors (including faculty supervising staff), and their coworkers. Ombuds Services operates in accordance with the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics and applicable University policies and procedures.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Ombuds Services shall not disclose the identity of a visitor or the substance of confidential or personally identifiable communications--whether written, spoken, or otherwise--unless the office:

- receives permission from a visitor to make a disclosure;
- determines there is imminent risk of serious harm to the visitor or to others; or
- is compelled or required by law to make the disclosure.

The University supports the confidentiality of Ombuds Services and encourages parties to make use of Ombuds Services to develop options for addressing their concerns.

3. INFORMAL AND VOLUNTARY RESOURCE

Ombuds Services provides informal assistance to voluntarily pursue constructive outcomes. A supervisor may require staff to schedule an initial visit with Ombuds Services. The visitor to Ombuds Services may then choose whether to pursue such services. The level of participation with Ombuds Services is determined by the visitor. Ombuds Services is not a required step in any formal processes at the University; it supplements, but does not replace, formal processes (such as disciplinary actions).

4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY

Ombuds Services tailors its responses to each visitor's concerns and questions based on the particular dynamics of a situation. Services provided by Ombuds Services may include:

- visits, or private conversations, with a neutral ombuds who will listen and may help develop options for problem solving;
- referrals to specific University offices or resources or to University policy for guidance in addressing the visitor's situation;
- informal inquiries to gain a greater understanding of a situation;
- facilitated conversations (mediations) or informal conversations facilitated by an experienced neutral party; and
- trainings on constructive conflict management skills and related topics.

Ombuds Services regularly informs University leadership about campus trends or systemic problems in a manner that protects confidentiality.

5. LIMITATIONS OF OMBUDS SERVICES

Ombuds Services does not conduct formal investigations. It does not adjudicate disputes, issue findings, impose remedies or sanctions, or make decisions on behalf of the University, its administrators, or the Board of Regents. It does not take sides or advocate on behalf of any individual, University unit, or cause.

Disclosures to Ombuds Services of alleged violations of law or policy are not considered notice to the University, nor can the office accept formal complaints on behalf of the University. Visitors are encouraged to discuss any concern with Ombuds Services, and Ombuds Services can provide assistance and referral information about providing formal notice to the University of alleged violations.

While Ombuds Services can listen and provide visitors with information and assistance in constructive conflict management, visitors are solely responsible for deciding what actions they wish to take.

6. NO RETALIATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN OMBUDS SERVICES

Employees have the right to consult Ombuds Services without fear of retaliation or reprisal. Retaliation against an employee for raising an issue or participating in Ombuds Services is prohibited. Furthermore, discouraging or preventing employees from seeking Ombuds Services is inappropriate because it is contrary to the University's intent of promoting constructive conflict management and resolution.

7. RECORDKEEPING

Ombuds Services does not keep permanent records regarding any individual. Any recordkeeping or note-taking related to a specific individual is used only as a temporary aid to help informally serve visitors. These informal records created by Ombuds Services are kept in the sole possession of the office, securely maintained, and destroyed in accordance with IOA standards.

Ombuds Services may create or maintain generic data, not attributable to specific visitors, for use in annual reporting and other similar purposes.

8. REFERENCES

UAP 2200 ("Reporting Suspected Misconduct and Whistleblower Protection from Retaliation")
UAP 2240 ("Respectful Campus")
UAP 2720 ("Prohibited Discrimination and Equal Opportunity")
UAP 2740 ("Sexual Misconduct")
UAP 3215 ("Performance Improvement")

APPENDIX B: IOA CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE

The International Ombudsman Association (IOA) is dedicated to the excellence in the practice of Ombudsman work. The IOA Code of Ethics provides a common set of professional ethical principles to which members adhere in their organizational Ombudsman practice.

Based on the traditions and values of Ombudsman practice, the Code of Ethics reflects a commitment to promote ethical conduct in the performance of the Ombudsman role and to maintain the integrity of the Ombudsman profession.

The Ombudsman shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the organization he or she serves, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of those organizations' practices, processes, and policies.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

INDEPENDENCE

The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

The Ombudsman, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombudsman does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

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.

APPENDIX C: UNIFORM REPORTING CATEGORIES (URC) WITH DESCRIPTIONS

Below are the International Ombuds Association (IOA) Uniform Reporting Categories (URC).

This is a list of categories developed by the IOA and used by ombuds around the world to anonymously classify the types of issues brought to their offices, identify trends in requests for services, and note opportunities for professional development and proactive conflict competency programming.

1. Compensation & Benefits

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.

- a. **Compensation** (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)
- b. **Payroll** (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)
- c. **Benefits** (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)
- d. **Retirement, Pension** (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)
- e. **Other** (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above sub-categories)

2. Supervisor/Supervisee Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)

- a. **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- b. **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- c. **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- d. **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- e. **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- f. **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- g. **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- h. **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- i. **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- j. **Assignments/Schedules** (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)
- k. **Feedback** (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)
- l. **Consultation** (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)

- m. **Performance Appraisal/Grading** (job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)
- n. **Departmental Climate** (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility.)
- o. **Supervisory Effectiveness** (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)
- p. **Insubordination** (refusal to do what is asked)
- q. **Discipline** (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)
- r. **Equity of Treatment** (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)
- s. **Other** (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory– employee or student–professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)

- a. **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- b. **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- c. **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- d. **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- e. **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- f. **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- g. **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- h. **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- i. **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- j. **Other** (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

4. Career Progression and Development

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)

- a. **Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes** (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)
- b. **Job Classification and Description** (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)
- c. **Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment** (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)

- d. **Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity** (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories)
- e. **Career Progression** (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)
- f. **Rotation and Duration of Assignment** (non- completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)
- g. **Resignation** (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)
- h. **Termination/Non-Renewal** (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)
- i. **Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff** (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)
- j. **Position Elimination** (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)
- k. **Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring** (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)
- l. **Other** (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above sub-categories)

5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse.

- a. **Criminal Activity** (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)
- b. **Business and Financial Practices** (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)
- c. **Harassment** (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)
- d. **Discrimination** (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc.[being part of an
- e. Equal Employment Opportunity protected category – applies in the U.S.]
- f. **Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation** (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)
- g. **Accessibility** (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)
- h. **Intellectual Property Rights** (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)
- i. **Privacy and Security of Information** (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)
- j. **Property Damage** (personal property damage, liabilities)
- k. **Other** (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above sub-categories)

6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

- a. **Safety** (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for training and equipment)

- b. **Physical Working/Living Conditions** (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc.)
- c. **Ergonomics** (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)
- d. **Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)
- e. **Security** (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying “compromise of classified or top secret” information))
- f. **Telework/Flexplace** (ability to work from home or other location because of business or
 - g. personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)
- h. **Safety Equipment** (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of
 - i. safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)
- j. **Environmental Policies** (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)
- k. **Work Related Stress and Work–Life Balance** (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)
- l. **Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)

7. Services/Administrative Issues

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

- a. **Quality of Services** (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)
- b. **Responsiveness/Timeliness** (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)
- c. **Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules** (impact of non-disciplinary decisions, decisions about requests for administrative and academic services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)
- d. **Behavior of Service Provider(s)** (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)
- e. **Other** (any services or administrative issue not described by the above sub-categories)

8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

- a. **Strategic and Mission-Related/ Strategic and Technical Management** (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)
- b. **Leadership and Management** (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)
- c. **Use of Positional Power/Authority** (lack or abuse of power provided by individual’s position)
- d. **Communication** (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader’s communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)

- e. **Restructuring and Relocation** (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g. downsizing, off shoring, outsourcing)
- f. **Organizational Climate** (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)
- g. **Change Management** (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)
- h. **Priority Setting and/or Funding** (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)
- i. **Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results** (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)
- j. **Interdepartment/Interorganization Work/Territory** (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)
- k. **Other** (any organizational issue not described by the above sub-categories)

9. Values, Ethics, and Standards

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.

- a. **Standards of Conduct** (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)
- b. **Values and Culture** (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)
- c. **Scientific Conduct/Integrity** (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)
- d. **Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8** (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)
- e. **Other** (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above sub-categories)

APPENDIX D: IOA UNIFORM REPORTING CATEGORIES & UNM VISITOR CONCERNS

Below are the number of visitors who indicated the following issue as a concern. Results based on 209 reports.

CATEGORY 1: COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness, and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits, and other benefit programs

- 1A. Compensation: **14**
- 1B. Payroll: **0**
- 1C. Benefits: **4**
- 1D. Retirement, Pension: **8**
- 1E. Other: **0**

CATEGORY 2: EVALUATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (e.g.: supervisor/employee)

- 2A. Priorities, Values, Beliefs: **30**
- 2B. Respect/Treatment: **69**
- 2C. Trust/Integrity: **64**
- 2D. Reputation: **44**
- 2E. Communication: **98**
- 2F. Bullying, Mobbing: **22**
- 2G. Diversity-Related: **28**
- 2H. Retaliation: **14**
- 2I. Physical Violence: **0**
- 2J. Assignments/Schedules **53**
- 2K. Feedback: **42**
- 2L. Consultation: **23**
- 2M. Performance Appraisal/Grading: **31**
- 2N. Departmental Climate: **88**
- 2O. Supervisory Effectiveness: **71**
- 2P. Insubordination: **7**
- 2Q. Discipline: **20**
- 2R. Equity of Treatment: **28**
- 2S. Other: **2**

CATEGORY 3: PEER & COLLEAGUE RELATIONSHIPS

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory/employee relationship (e.g.: two staff members within the same department)

- 3A. Priorities, Values, Beliefs: **18**
- 3B. Respect/Treatment: **34**
- 3C. Trust/Integrity: **21**
- 3D. Reputation: **25**
- 3E. Communication: **44**
- 3F. Bullying/Mobbing: **20**

- 3G. Diversity-Related: **6**
- 3H. Retaliation: **12**
- 3I. Physical Violence: **2**
- 3J. Other: **0**

CATEGORY 4: CAREER PROGRESSION & DEVELOPMENT

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails (e.g.: recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation)

- 4A. Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes: **10**
- 4B. Job Classification and Description: **8**
- 4C. Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment: **11**
- 4D. Tenure/Position Security or Ambiguity: **9**
- 4E. Career Progression: **33**
- 4F. Rotation and Duration of Assignment: **5**
- 4G. Resignation: **24**
- 4H. Termination/Non-renewal: **5**
- 4I. Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff: **0**
- 4J. Position Elimination: **0**
- 4K. Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring: **16**
- 4L. Other: **1**

CATEGORY 5: LEGAL, REGULATORY, FINANCIAL, & COMPLIANCE

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction, etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud, or abuse

- 5A. Criminal Activity: **1**
- 5B. Business and Financial Practice: **0**
- 5C. Harassment: **15**
- 5D. Discrimination: **13**
- 5E. Disability, Reasonable Accommodation: **4**
- 5F. Accessibility: **0**
- 5G. Intellectual Property Rights: **1**
- 5H. Privacy and Security of Information: **2**
- 5I. Property Damage: **0**
- 5J. Other: **0**

CATEGORY 6: SAFETY, HEALTH, & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about safety, health, and infrastructure related issues

- 6A. Safety: **10**
- 6B. Physical Working/Living Conditions: **2**
- 6C. Ergonomics: **5**
- 6D. Cleanliness: **7**
- 6E. Security: **0**
- 6F. Telework/Flexplace: **23**
- 6G. Safety Equipment: **0**
- 6H. Environmental Policies: **3**
- 6I. Work-Related Stress and Work-Life Balance: **75**

6J. Other: **0**

CATEGORY 7: SERVICES/ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties

- 7A. Quality of Services: **7**
- 7B. Responsiveness/Timeliness: **9**
- 7C. Administrative Decisions, Interpretation/Application of Rules: **4**
- 7D. Behavior of Service Provider(s): **1**
- 7E. Other: **0**

CATEGORY 8: ORGANIZATIONAL, STRATEGIC, & MISSION RELATED

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization

- 8A. Strategic, Mission-Related, and Technical Management: **14**
- 8B. Leadership and Management: **29**
- 8C. Use of Positional Power/Authority: **15**
- 8D. Communication: **22**
- 8E. Restructuring and Relocation: **21**
- 8F. Organizational Climate: **35**
- 8G. Change Management: **48**
- 8H. Priority Setting and/or Funding: **11**
- 8I. Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results: **0**
- 8J. Inter-department/Inter-organization Work/Territory: **12**
- 8K. Other: **0**

CATEGORY 9: VALUES, ETHICS, & STANDARDS

Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies and/or standards

- 9A. Standards of Conduct: **5**
- 9B. Values and Culture: **11**
- 9C. Scientific Conduct/Integrity: **9**
- 9D. Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1-8: **1**

APPENDIX E: 2020 VISIT FEEDBACK SURVEY RESPONSES WITH COMMENTS

The following comments were written on Anonymous Visitor Feedback Surveys.

- You all do such amazing work. Thank you for your support of the UNM Community.
- I was surprised at how well phone-only worked! I thought I'd miss the in-person (expression/body language etc.) but it meant that there was focus on the tone, content, and even paying attention to the background noises to check in!
- Ombuds is such a wonderful UNM organization. Probably half of my staff has used them at one time or another. Through workshops, groups mediation, and individual sessions, they have helped us grow into a more functional and humane organization.
- [The ombuds] is the best, most helpful listener in the world.
- Great service!
- Very professional, easy going and confidential.
- Thank you for some great strategies!
- It was really worthwhile to have an impartial set of ears to listen to me and give me feedback through a new set of eyes and give me hope and value! Thank you!!
- Thank you!
- Great listener and great at recalling the information presented to her. The session was very useful to me to flush out what I want for my career and this job.
- Thank you so much for your dedication and commitment to making UNM a better place!
- :-)
- Thank you! Very clarifying. Appreciate feeling supportive.
- I feel much better than when I first arrived. I feel like a weight has been lifted and I have a new approach to handle my current situation.
- I am happy and thankful that UNM offers this resource. It was so helpful and I learned some new things while here. I plan to return if I should have any other issue/concern arise.
- It was really helpful to be able to voice my concerns and to hear them reflected back. I was bogged down in my frustration and feeling powerless. I now have some concrete steps to take with improving the situation.
- Gained much new perspective.
- Ombuds is one the best services offered to employees. The insight I've received in my sessions are always on point and give me a working new perspective. I utilize these services often and will continue to do so.
- I love this place and how it's set up (very homey).
- Thanks!
- Just thank you again for your non-judgmental insight. I am very grateful for your help!
- Thank you for your help! I felt like you heard me and helped me find ways to fix the problem more than anyone in my office has. I will work to further this process and may be back to you with my supervisor.
- Thank you for the amazing clarity and for helping me focus on the core issue. I feel like the fog has lifted and I'm able to move forward with a resolutions.
- Very helpful to sort and categorize priorities.
- Great Session. Very very helpful. thank you!
- Thanks for offering this resource. I am excited to engage in the process and see where it leads.

- Thank you for all that you do!!
- This was very beneficial in helping me to come to a better perspective of my situation. The ombuds is wonderful!
- Thank you for your excellence. I really feel heard and that the Ombuds person is totally present and bringing their top game to the Visit every time.
- I had a really good experience today, which helped me process the information i was holding onto as well as clarify on what steps i want to take moving forward. Thank you!
- [Ombuds] is amazing. She is a great listener and very helpful. My conversation with her helped me identify what outcome I want and how to try to achieve them. The only suggestion I have is that the services of Ombuds need to be better advertised.
- I really felt that I was listened to during my visits, and the suggestions are so insightful and valuable to my personal situations. I am so glad that this resource is available!
- Talking things through with [the ombuds] was extremely helpful to me in considering how to address performance issues with an individual I supervise. [The ombuds] guided me through the Crucial Conversations planning process, and helped me to drill down to what I really wanted and how to express that from a clean place.
- I think [the ombuds] is a great mediator - she serves as a great resource in and out of the formal process, making what can be very uncomfortable into a more safe environment.
- Comfortable and informative conversation very enjoyable.
- This is a wonderful resource that should be utilized by all members of the workforce. The breadth of experience and abilities of the staff in the ombuds office provides a variety of options for individuals, teams, and departments that is rare in outside entities.
- Great service, it helped me a lot. Thank you!
- [Ombuds], thank you for actively listening and offering viable action which I can implement. You are wonderful and such a joy to work with! :)
- Ombuds is a wonderful resource for UNM faculty and staff to present issues and concerns.
- Really important work being done here, it is greatly appreciated!
- Great group of people - necessary service provided.
- This was a great visit; thanks [ombuds], and especially, the Office of the Provost, for providing this important service!
- [Ombuds] was very attentive and I appreciated her insight and time.
- Great, and insightful, as always.
- Thank you!
- [The ombuds] was very helpful in thinking through next steps after having a crucial conversation with a staff member I supervise. I feel very seen, heard and valued by her. I appreciate the wisdom and great ideas that she shares.
- My conversation with [the ombuds] was incredibly helpful, as always! I felt heard and through [the ombudsperson's] thoughtful listening and prompts, I left with greater clarity and a concrete plan to address a thorny issue. Thank you!
- The strategizing and advice was extremely helpful.
- There is no possible way that I can find the words to describe how meaningful this session was for me. Thank you!!!!!!
- Very much enjoyed my time with [Ombuds]!
- Always so helpful for re-framing and re-directing when I am feeling overwhelmed. [The ombuds] is such an amazing presence and support and she has helped me so much. I could not be happier with everything I have learned.

- It is always a pleasure to talk to Ombuds when I have something that needs to be taken care of. I felt listened to, supported, and encouraged to take action on my current situation so it gets better in the future. This visit took a weight off my shoulders for sure. I appreciate [them] very much. Thank you for all you do for the UNM community.
- My conversation was quite helpful as I began to understand and uncover the best dialogue options to handle challenging conversations. The Ombuds associate I communicated with spoke to me in confidentiality and impartiality and made me feel comfortable, heard, and understood. Overall, a great service that I would recommend to others.
- Thank you! I felt heard and validated. I received tips and strategies for my situation and now it's up to me.
- Very thankful for my time with Ombuds. I appreciated feeling heard and the questions asked in response to my situation that prompted the best ways to grow and build on my experiences for the future.
- This was my first meeting to discuss Ombuds services for teams. [The ombuds] is a skilled, thoughtful and compassionate listener. I left the session with greater optimism about managing current tensions between staff to improve workplace climate and culture. Thanks, [ombuds].
- [The ombuds] was wonderful!
- I cannot emphasize enough how grateful I am to having this resource at UNM! I always recommend to colleagues that are having problems that come up for them, including the folks I supervise. I think it is so important that UNM employees have a safe space to discuss conflicts, concerns, etc to help them get clear and navigate their professional dilemmas. I wish everyone at UNM knew about and used ombuds, especially before conflicts or problems become more entrenched. The professionals with this department are so good at what they do!
- I think ombuds is a terrific resource. While I understand that the success of mediation is based wholly on the willingness of the parties to mediate, I do wish there were some channel that would allow for something of a "forced" sit-down. Management is often reluctant to have those difficult conversations, or to even be in the room with direct reports experiencing conflict. When one party refuses to mediate through ombuds, that leaves the other party a bit nowhere when management is ineffective.
- The office is an incredibly important asset of the university. We are lucky to have them and more people should take advantage of their services.
- We found the session to be very helpful. But we do need to follow up!
- Having someone truly listen to you and exchange ideas in a neutral, safe and confidential setting makes all the difference in the world so that you can take healthy steps and make positive resolutions. Thank you.
- [The ombuds] is wise and knowledgeable, which I appreciate!!
- [Ombuds] is an extraordinarily skilled listener. She provided great insight and was very knowledgeable and articulate. My meeting with Ombuds provided clarity on what I "need" and how to ask for it so that I may be more productive and efficient in my role.
- This was my second time speaking with an Ombuds practitioner in a one on one basis, and I found it just as helpful and thought provoking as last time. Great work, would absolutely recommend it.
- I very much enjoyed my visit today. It is nice to process out loud, to hear back how what I am saying is interpreted by another, and to have that time to connect with another, particularly in these COVID times.

- This was an excellent opportunity to learn how the Ombuds Services personnel can help our branch campus employees. So many times the branches are left out of the discussion and I was happy to learn that they have a well planned way of dealing with employees at a distance.
- I was aware of the Ombuds Services and had recommended on several occasions to people I felt would benefit from their services. I had never had first-hand experience with their services and I was pleased with the discussion I had with [the ombuds]. She is a great listener!
- [The ombuds] is a gift to the UNM community. Her name comes up from time to time and always with the utmost regard. She is very well-respected and is known for her amazing communication and mediation skills. My appointment with [her] was incredibly helpful to the future of my career at UNM. I am grateful for her assistance.
- [The ombuds] was wonderful- I enjoyed her style and approach to the mediation services.
- Very helpful to work with [ombuds]!
- [The ombuds] is an excellent Ombuds and professional. An asset to the University of New Mexico!!
- Excellent session. [The ombuds] is an outstanding listener and summarized my thoughts and ramblings in a succinct and cogent manner. She is very good at what she does! Thanks for having the Ombuds office.
- [This ombuds] is a true asset to the Ombuds office and to the UNM community. Her compassion, empathy and wisdom are greatly appreciated. She is a wonderful human being! I share her contact info with as many people as possible! True jewel!
- My experience was great! [The ombuds] helped me see the situation clearly and chart a path forward.
- This is a great service and benefit for staff. It was an excellent, safe and helpful way of processing the issue at hand that provided a different approach to the issue. Thank you!

Additional notes on responses:

- Any signatures by visitors are excluded.
- Any references to a specific ombud have been changed to say “the ombud” or “ombuds”. Any gendered pronouns for specific ombuds have also been changed in these ways. Any instances where these changes are inserted can be identified by square brackets (“[]”).
- There is one instance where a visitor’s writing could not be made out entirely. The portions that are unreadable are excluded and marked by ellipses (...).
- For cases where a visitor did not end their writing with punctuation, a period has been inserted at the end. This was done to signify that all of the writing has been included. If a visitor used other punctuation, that punctuation was included instead.

APPENDIX F: WORKSHOPS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT + OUTREACH

We provided over **45** professional development workshops, presentations and learning opportunities, reaching more than **500** members of the UNM community over **65 hours**.

- Are We Talking About the Same Things? Getting Clear Can be the Difference Between Success, Failure, Frustration and Ease. (a 1 hour workshop)
- Collaboration: Skills Practice to Overcome Obstacles and Build Bridges (a 1 -2 hours workshop)
- Crucial Conversations® (a 18 hour course over 3 days)
- Crucial Conversations®: Online Self-Paced with Tailored 1:1 Support and Coaching from UNM Ombuds
- Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast (multi sessions)
- Difficult Conversations: Start Here to End Well (a 2 hour workshop)
- Generations in the Workplace (a 3 hour workshop)
- Introduction to Ombuds Services: What's in it for you? (a 20 minute presentation)
- Listening + Acknowledging Skills Practice Session (a 1 hour workshop)
- Reframing Conflict (a 1-2 hours workshop)
- So...I Have to Report: Listening and Responding Supportively to Accounts of Sexual Violence and Misconduct for UNM Responsible Employees (a 1 hour training)
- Supportive Listening 101: Listening and Responding Supportively to Accounts of Sexual Misconduct (a 30 minute presentation)
- The Role of the Organizational Ombuds (a 1 hour presentation)
- Trending Topics in Ombuds Visits During COVID (a 1 hour presentation)

2020 Ombuds Day Flyer



Ombuds Open House

Remember Last Year?

For last year's International Ombuds Day, we invited you to stop by to enjoy snacks, make your own button, and meet with President Stokes, all in a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere.

This Year is NOT Like Last Year

So much is different this year, but our relaxing and welcoming atmosphere is still the same.

Visitors often refer to Ombuds Services as an oasis that gives you safety and support to take a deep breath, reflect, process, and plan for a better future.

Your Personal Invitation

Instead of meeting in person on Oct. 8th, this year we invite you to schedule your own restorative 1:1 visit at your convenience.

Just e-mail JoEllen Ransom, Staff Ombuds (jransom@unm.edu) or Anne Lightsey, Associate Ombuds (alight01@unm.edu) to schedule a visit.



For more information on Ombuds Services, see below or visit <https://ombudsforsaf.unm.edu/index.html>

Any Time, Any Reason

Ombuds Services for Staff is here for you (staff, faculty supervising staff and your co-workers). We listen and provide information to support your success and well-being. We provide a confidential, constructive, and informal process to support you in meeting your challenges and goals while working at UNM.

Some Reasons to Schedule a Visit

There is no wrong time and no wrong reason to contact the Ombuds Office.

People often schedule a visit to problem-solve and strategize about:

- Interpersonal relationships between peers, colleagues, supervisors and supervisees, and others whom you encounter while working for UNM.
- Opportunities for professional growth, performance appraisal, promotion, disciplinary action, planning leaves, changing roles, leaving UNM.
- Any challenge, dilemma or goal that affects work and life at UNM
- Identity-based harassment, discrimination, abuse of power, bullying, inequitable working environments, inappropriate relationships, unwanted sexual attention.
- Self-reflection about bias, and your personal journey to promote equity.
- Safety issues, working conditions including challenges related to isolation, working remotely, or returning to campus safely.

When to Schedule a Visit

The sooner you begin to address a concern or goal, the more options you have for pursuing a successful outcome.

Ombuds Services is here to support you wherever you may be in that process

How to Schedule a Visit

Just e-mail JoEllen Ransom, Staff Ombuds (jransom@unm.edu) or Anne Lightsey, Associate Ombuds (alight01@unm.edu) to schedule a visit.

Holiday Flyer



2020. What a Year.

Need to process the wild ride that was 2020? Congratulate yourself on making it through? Mourn who or what was lost? Reflect on the silver-linings? Then consider scheduling a confidential, informal visit with Ombuds Services.

2021?

Want to start 2021 out on your best foot? Reflect on your priorities? Figure out how to do a better job at self-care? Prepare for hard decisions or difficult conversations? Explore how to do less with less? Then again, consider scheduling a visit with Ombuds Services.

Before or After?

Schedule your visit before the winter break to close out 2020, or in Jan. or Feb. to kick-off the new year, whenever feels best for you.

How?

Just e-mail JoEllen Ransom, Staff Ombuds (jransom@unm.edu) or Anne Lightsey, Associate Ombuds (alight01@unm.edu) to schedule a visit.



For more information on Ombuds Services, see below or visit <https://ombudsforstaf.unm.edu/index.html>

APPENDIX G: ARTICLE BY DR. MARY ROWE

Published June 16, 2020 in the IOA blog

COVID, racism and the need for safe, accessible, fair and credible conflict management systems in organizations (and communities)

By Prof. Mary Rowe, MIT

COVID-19 and the murder of Mr. George Floyd have illuminated—like a lightning storm—the need for constituents in every job classification to find safe, accessible, fair and credible ways to express concerns within their organizations and seek help. We need effective conflict management systems in organizations, *and every major system needs at least one safe, independent, neutral, confidential professional as an access point*. It helps if there are people of color and women who serve as safe access points to the conflict management system. In addition, every system needs competent, independent, fair, formal investigations, and investigation teams should include women and people of color, or at least regular input from diverse professionals.

In the last three months, I have listened to more than 60 organizational ombuds from around the world. These ombuds serve organizations in all sectors, helping both their employers and all of their constituents to deal with workplace concerns. Many ombuds are working almost literally around the clock, with up to 40+ Zoom meetings a week, listening to employees and managers (and other cohorts like students and faculty as relevant to the organization).

Many constituents *at all levels*, and especially employees, managers and students of color, have been afraid to seek help, and turn to ombuds offices—often in desperation. Ombuds help their employers to deal with risk by helping to identify and assess and communicate about concerns. At the same time, ombuds help each of their constituents to deal with the risk of seeking help by being neutral, confidential and independent resources who keep no case records.

Ombuds are doing their best to support individuals and groups to understand the resources - if any - that are available to them and to offer options for communicating their concerns. The pathways to address concerns are often unknown by those who have them. It is critical for organizations to provide channels for voicing these issues in a way that employees and managers (and all other groups relevant to the organization) perceive as safe, accessible, fair and credible. While ombuds do not have management decision-making authority, constituents may be able to contribute to new solutions if they can do so safely. By the same token senior officers also need accurate information and new ideas. Helping employees, managers and students to surface concerns in an orderly way may support effective strategic planning by senior officers.

Some issues causing conflict that I hear from many sectors include:

- Individuals being required to work when they deem it is not safe—and an appalling lack of OSHA protection;
- Gross inequities with respect to personal safety, particularly for people of color and women;
- Lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), lack of testing, fear of repeated nasopharyngeal tests, and distrust of virus and serological tests;
- Being required to work when family demands are impossible to meet; dealing with anger, fear, and grief from family and friends;
- Very sharp increases in emotional and mental health needs throughout the organization, from lower-level employees and students to senior leaders;
- Profound compassion fatigue and burnout on the part of human services professionals in organizations, including health care staff, human resources staff, and employee assistance program (EAP) staff;
- Concerns about coworkers, fellow students, and managers not complying with safety regulations, especially regarding masks and physical distancing. Questions come up like “How can we complain safely? Why isn’t our conflict management system enforcing the rules?”
- Inequities of every sort—especially about “who has to come in” to the workplace and who is bearing the brunt of COVID-19 (with racism, sexism, and xenophobia all sharply on the rise);
- Being heavily monitored online by AI applications when working from home, with serious privacy fears; not everyone is happy about their home life being visible or trackable on Zoom;
- Panic about possible layoffs in households that are already out of money;
- Employees at all levels—and students—wanting to be included in planning returns to work and in planning changes to respond to the many systemic inequities faced by people of color and women.

Mary Rowe is an Adjunct Professor of Negotiation and Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management. She retired from the MIT Ombuds Office in 2014 after 41+ years as an organizational ombudsman.

“It is always a pleasure to talk to Ombuds when I have something that needs to be taken care of. I felt listened to, supported, and encouraged to take action on my current situation so it gets better in the future. This visit took a weight off my shoulders for sure. I appreciate [them] very much. Thank you for all you do for the UNM community.”