

WHO ARE THE OMBUDS?

NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE? GIVE US A CALL!

The UWG Ombuds Office helps people express concerns, understand policy, manage conflicts, and learn more productive ways of communicating. The office serves as an independent, confidential, neutral and informal resource to the UWG community (faculty, staff and students). It provides a place where every voice can be heard without fear of retaliation or loss of privacy. The Ombuds Office seeks to promote fair and equitable treatment of all visitors.

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Appointments are recommended. Use of email for confidential information is discouraged.



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OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OMBUDS



Confidential



Independent



Informal



Neutral

THE OMBUDS OFFICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Conflict is a fact of life, but it doesn't have to consume your life. The University of West Georgia has created the University Ombuds Office to help faculty, staff and students resolve issues of conflict on campus. Trained Ombuds staff will offer informal, confidential guidance to visitors to help reach mutually acceptable resolutions of disputes in a non-adversarial process.

WHAT IS AN OMBUDS?

The term, of Swedish origin, refers to a person who has been designated to assist in dispute resolution and to promote conflict management and cooperation throughout the campus community. At UWG, professional staff in the University Ombuds Office report to the President of the university. They are trained in accordance with the standards of the International Ombudsman Association.

WHAT DOES THE OMBUDS OFFICE DO?

- Operates informally, independent of the formal organizational structure of the university.
- Works to resolve concerns, complaints and questions from faculty, staff and students about university policies, procedures and practices.
- Promotes fairness, equitable treatment and respect throughout the university community.
- Makes recommendations for institutional change.
- Provides feedback with regard to trends or issues.
- Designs and conducts training programs in conflict resolution.

HOW DOES AN OMBUDS HELP TO SOLVE PROBLEMS?

- Acts in a neutral and impartial manner.
- Listens carefully in confidence.
- Provides advice and options and information on university policies and procedures.
- Makes inquiries and referrals to other university resources.
- Facilitates communication between parties and may agree to be present in a meeting with you and another party. Or may arrange for formal mediation.
- Has access to any other university office and maintains the confidentiality of information received.

WHAT DOES AN OMBUDS NOT DO?

- Violate a confidence except when there is an imminent threat of physical harm or when required to by court order or law.
- Serve as an advocate or adjudicator or make decisions about university policy.
- Compel anyone to accept a recommendation.
- Subvert administrative procedures.
- Be involved in a formal investigation, hearing, or compliance function.
- Take sides.

- Offer legal advice or serve as an office of notice. Individuals wishing to put the university on notice will be advised of the proper procedure.
- Keep records other than non-identifying statistical data. Informal notes are destroyed promptly.

WHEN SHOULD I CONTACT THE OMBUDS OFFICE?

- When you experience an issue or concern that you are not able to resolve through the usual channels of communication.
- When you have a university-related problem that you do not know how to resolve.

Workplace complaints, such as discrimination, supervisor/employee disputes, preferential treatment and professional misconduct, and instructor/student issues are examples of concerns appropriate to bring to the Ombuds. University policy provides assurance that you will not suffer reprisal for seeking the services of the office.

OFFICE OF THE
**UNIVERSITY
OMBUDS**