Northern Illinois University

OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OMBUDSPERSON

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Ombudsperson shall be an individual who is authorized to investigate, to recommend, and if necessary, to make public reports. He/she shall not have the power to reverse decisions made or actions taken by the normally constituted authorities of the university. As a designated neutral party, the Ombudsperson shall not serve as an advocate for any individual.

FUNCTIONS OF THE OMBUDSPERSON

To assist all members of the university community - students, faculty, administrative, and civil servants - in accomplishing the expeditious settlement of their problems. The Ombudsperson may advise a person that he/she fails to find merit in the person's complaint, request, or grievance or may direct that person to seek remedy before another duly constituted body or office of the university. The Ombudsperson may also assist the person in an informal capacity. (Note: The University Council has also established the position of Faculty Personnel Advisor to assist faculty with problems in the personnel process of the university. Staff members with problems could also seek assistance from the Director of Human Resource Services or his or her staff.)

To establish simple, orderly procedures for receiving administrative, academic and individual complaints and grievances in the university community.

To have access in the performance of the Ombudsperson's duties to all members of the university community and all university records and reports (with the exception of medical, psychiatric and psychological records which will be released only upon presentation of a notarized waiver signed by the individual whose records are requested).

To report directly when the Ombudsperson deems it necessary, to the President, valid complaints for which no remedy has been found; to also report any recommendations he/she wishes to make regarding such complaints.

To administer the operation of the office, including the activities and workload of the office staff.
To make regular reports to the university community regarding the operation of the Ombudsperson Office. Reports should carefully distinguish between contacts referred elsewhere and contacts formally assisted by the Ombudsperson, with information provided as to the kinds of assistance offered. These reports shall be made to the University Council.

To be conversant with a broad spectrum of university problems and issues.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS OF THE OMBUDSPERSON

In addition to other qualifications/criteria established by the Ombudsperson Review/Search Committee, the individual must: have knowledge of how a university functions; be able to deal successfully with a wide variety of people; maintain client confidentiality; possess mediation and communication skills; and have an earned master's degree (doctorate is preferred).

TERMS OF OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON

The University Ombudsperson shall serve an initial term of 36 months and shall be eligible for reappointment to successive three-year terms if recommended by the Ombudsperson Review/Search Committee and acceptable to the President. During the last year of an incumbent's term, the committee shall determine whether the Ombudsperson wishes to be considered for another three-year term and, if so, the committee shall conduct a review of the Ombudsperson's performance. The committee shall provide for appropriate input from members of the university community and, upon conclusion of the review, submit a recommendation regarding reappointment to the President.

ANNUAL EVALUATION OF OMBUDSPERSON

Early in the spring semester of the first and second year of the Ombudsperson's term, University Affairs Committee of the University Council will evaluate the performance of the Ombudsperson and submit the evaluation to the President with a copy to the University Council.

THE SEARCH FOR THE OMBUDSPERSON

The search for the University Ombudsperson shall be conducted by the Ombudsperson Review/Search Committee. (For composition, duties and procedures refer to Committees of the University, section II, Ombudsperson Review/Search Committee.)
THE STAFF OF THE OMBUDSPERSON

The Office of the University Ombudsperson shall include an Ombudsperson and at least one staff member, both full-time. An assistant to the Ombudsperson may be appointed at any time.

ASSISTANT TO THE OMBUDSPERSON

The Ombudsperson may, at his/her discretion, employ an Assistant to the Ombudsperson. Such an assistant shall be employed under normal employment guidelines and shall be selected by the Ombudsperson following advertisements of the position in the local media. The individual selected to fill the position of Assistant to the Ombudsperson shall require the approval of the President of the university and the University Council.

(9-13-95)