

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Faculty Ombuds Office Annual Report 2006/2007
Submitted September 7, 2007, by Ombudspersons
Katherine Greenberg, Joanne Hall, & Julia Malia

The appointed members of the Faculty Ombuds Office present an annual report to the university regarding general issues and recommendations derived from our unique opportunity to observe from a neutral position issues between faculty and administrators. These comments are general in nature, as we make every effort to maintain confidentiality of faculty members who have sought our services as well as administrators involved in our cases. This report is based on 25 cases handled by Ombudspersons between fall 2006 and fall 2007 and the patterns we have observed in our cases over the past two years. While it is possible that the issues we address are rare, it is also possible that they highlight areas where improvement in policy and/or practice will benefit the university as a whole. Part I focuses on issues and recommendations. Part II focuses on the status of recommendations addressed in the annual report we presented one year ago. An addendum to this report presents our perspective on the current efforts of the Provost's Office and Faculty Senate to restructure the Ombuds Office. These reports have been announced to the faculty and academic administrators, posted on the Ombuds Office webpage, and linked from the Faculty Senate website. We are available to discuss these issues and recommendations upon the request of the faculty and/or the administration.

Part I
Issues and Recommendations

Promotion and Tenure Issues

The faculty and administration focus considerable attention every year on policy regarding promotion and tenure (P & T). The majority of our Ombuds cases concern some aspect of this policy. We are not suggesting all candidates warrant P & T. However, we are saying that tenure-track faculty should be provided an opportunity to develop a clear understanding about the interpretation of criteria appropriate to their position, that evaluators' decisions be consistent with feedback provided throughout the retention process, that feedback be candid and comprehensive, and that unsuccessful candidates be treated with care and respect. We found it helpful to reflect upon our cases in relation to a document prepared jointly by the American Council on Education, the American Association of University Professors, and the United Educators Insurance Risk Retention Group: *Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation: Advice for Tenured Faculty, Department Chairs, and Academic Administrators* (<http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/tenure-evaluation.pdf>) In this report, we organized this section according to the language and concepts presented in the *Good Practice* document.

1. Issues re Clarity in Standards and Procedures for Tenure Evaluation

Clarity of expectations for faculty performance is almost always an issue in a large and diverse university. The nuances of expectations frequently change when new administrators take office. Based on our cases, it appears that candidates were unaware of such changes and/or learned about these subtle but pivotal expectations with very limited time to demonstrate evidence in meeting them. Ombuds cases highlight problems with clarity especially in regards to a principle of the *Good Practice* document: "Evaluators at all stages of the tenure process should know and apply the criteria appropriate to the

candidate” (*Checklist on Clarity* item 2, p. 8). According to university policy, department and college bylaws regarding P & T are supposed to assist tenure-track faculty and evaluators in applying criteria appropriate to the candidate. Our cases suggest, however, that these bylaws are not serving this purpose very well, especially as related to unfavorable P & T decisions. These cases consistently bring into question whether or not evaluators at all levels (including university faculty and administrators as well as external reviewers), clearly understand how evaluation criteria relate to a given candidate, particularly when evaluating candidates in fields with criteria for scholarship that varies significantly from more traditional fields—or where controversy exists between fields and their newly developing subfields. In some of our cases, evaluators within UT as well as external reviewers either have been unaware of the specific and different interpretations of scholarly criteria or have applied criteria to the candidate in a different manner than active scholars in that field.

In some situations, external reviewers have not been active scholars for a considerable number of years and were likely unaware of how quality of scholarship is currently determined within the candidate’s subfield (e.g., how and where to disseminate scholarly activities). In our cases, the candidates were frequently unaware of the implications of this lack of agreement and/or lack of knowledge on the part of internal and external evaluators.

We also observed situations in which some department heads and mentors were unaware of the need to clearly communicate within the dossier the nuances of criteria appropriate to the candidate and the departmental bylaws—in an effort to adequately inform evaluators outside the department. The problem was exacerbated when faculty members participating on P & T committees beyond the department level were discouraged and in some cases prohibited from responding to questions regarding the appropriate manner in which criteria should be applied to a given candidate, based on departmental bylaws and the culture of the field. The university policy is clear about one vote per faculty evaluator (i.e., evaluators who serve on P & T committees at the college level vote on a candidate at the department level and do not vote again at the college level). It is important to note, however, that the university does not have policy regarding whether recused faculty members can respond to questions from other evaluators related to departmental application of criteria appropriate to the candidate. It appears that some college committees encourage evaluators to seek clarification from a recused faculty member and some forbid it, even though this person may be the only one who can provide insight needed to apply standards appropriate to the candidate.

We continue to observe that some departments are not in compliance with university policy. Although university P & T guidelines mandate annual, separately written retention reports from the department head and tenured faculty, some candidates received retention reports from only the department head, who may or may not have clearly represented the tenured faculty’s opinions and feedback to the tenure-track faculty members. Some departmental bylaws do not clarify university criteria for P & T to ensure they are applied in a manner appropriate to the candidate.

Ideally, mentors play a central role in ensuring tenure-track faculty members understand policy, procedures, and expectations for P & T. In some of our Ombuds cases, however, mentoring appeared ineffective. These tenure-track faculty members appeared confused

about certain aspects of the P & T process, including how the criteria would be applied in evaluating their performance. It was not surprising to us that they were confused also about the role of a mentor and how to work effectively with a mentor. They were reluctant to request a different mentor out of concern this would be held against them. They discussed a hesitancy to speak frankly with the mentor and, in some situations, did not think the advice they received was helpful, particularly when the mentor was from outside their field and/or department and was not able to assist them in interpreting the nuances of suggestions about how to meet expectations and/or improve performance. Some indicated they met with the mentor only once a semester. The deeper issue from our perspective is whether mentoring is viewed as an important service to the university and tenure-track faculty and, if so, how to help mentors understand their role and develop the necessary skills to be effective. From our perspective, our academic programs benefit greatly when the tenured faculty accept responsibility to nurture newer colleagues and assist them in learning the culture of academia as we live it. Only then can we effectively judge their new colleagues' performance.

Recommendations.

- 1.1 Expand training for department heads, faculty mentors, deans, and appropriate others to include a focus on skills that can better ensure tenure-track faculty members' understanding of the culture of our university, its expectations, and the culture of P & T itself.
- 1.2 Department heads should provide a clear explanation of departmental bylaws that can assist evaluators in applying university criteria in a manner appropriate to their candidates. This explanation should be included in (a) the department head's evaluation report and recommendation included in the candidate's dossier and (b) letters to external reviewers of the candidate's dossier.
- 1.3 Mentors should assist their mentees in preparing for P & T workshops so they can seek effective clarification of the process and procedures. Mentors should seek further clarification on behalf of their mentees as needed.
- 1.4 Department heads should be responsible for ensuring that all external reviewers are active scholars within the field and subfield of the candidate and can review the dossier without bias if a controversy about scholarship standards exists within that field or subfield.
- 1.5 College P & T committees (and any other relevant university committee) should provide an opportunity for the recused member to share information about the culture of scholarship in the candidate's field and to clarify departmental bylaws.
- 1.6 Candidates should be encouraged to provide an explanation for missing documents that are expected to be included in the dossier. The candidate should not be penalized for missing documents prior to the year in which policy changed.
- 1.7 Documents outlining procedures for preparing the dossier should clearly state that candidates and their department heads are encouraged to provide explanations regarding materials they believe will improve clarity regarding P & T evaluation

appropriate to the candidate. The candidate should be encouraged to include an annotated curriculum vita (i.e., for each scholarly activity, include information related to aspects such as the percent of contribution made by the candidate to collaborative projects, the meaning of the order of contributors within the candidate's field, the ranking of journals in which the candidate has published, the comprehensiveness and time commitment necessary for specific scholarly projects, etc.).

1.8 Department heads should ensure that written reports of tenured faculty retention reviews as well as their own be shared with tenure-track faculty annually.

2. Issues re Consistency in Tenure Decisions

According to the *Good Practice* document, "A negative tenure decision should not be the first criticism of the individual's performance" (*Checklist on Consistency*, p. 13). And yet, the startled perception of faculty members in at least six Ombuds cases during the 2006/2007 academic year suggested that their P & T decisions were based on (a) inconsistent feedback across retention and P & T reports, (b) inconsistent reliance on minority views included in the dossier, and/or (c) inconsistent interpretation of expectations appropriate to the candidate.

In these cases, candidates were surprised by what appeared to them to be a reversal of opinion, especially when they received clear support for P & T at the departmental level and clear lack of support at college and/or central levels. Candidates reported to us that some departmental tenured faculty members were as surprised as they were by the reasons given at college and central levels to deny or delay P & T. For example, evaluation reports representing the views of college committee members and administrators above the department level suggested that the opinions of external reviewers were viewed as highly significant and, when inconsistent with departmental opinion and even the opinions of other external reviewers, were cited as the basis for denial. In an ideal situation, external reviewers are leaders in the field and subfield of the candidate and have no affiliations that might override their objectivity. In the real world, however, external reviewers may not apply P & T criteria consistent with the candidates' subfield and/or be biased because of some controversy within the field.

Recommendations.

2.1 P & T policy should address the need for consistency in the sharing of expectations and opinions during the P & T process. Procedures should be established to clarify reasons for inconsistent opinions that occur between (a) the majority of tenured faculty and the department head, (b) the majority of evaluators within the department and the majority of external reviewers or evaluators at the college and central level, (c) the majority of college committee members and the dean, and (d) the majority of evaluators within the college and central administrators. These procedures should take place prior to review at the next level and should include opportunity for an appropriate group to gather additional information and to conduct interviews as needed.

2.2 Department heads should (a) seek clarification of institutional expectations that may affect consistency in P & T reviews, (b) share this information with their faculty (both

evaluators and tenure-track), and (c) ensure that feedback relevant to these expectations is included in annual retention reports.

2.3 Department heads should note issues regarding institutional expectations in relation to the subfields represented in their department, seek input from their faculty, and clarify these issues with the administration.

2.4 Department heads should ensure that retention reports address concerns discussed in prior reports (i.e., state the degree to which specific concerns have been addressed by the person and clearly delineate new concerns and/or evidence of strengths). They also should ensure that inconsistencies between retention reports and departmental P & T review opinions are clarified in the candidate's dossier.

3. Issues re Candor in the Evaluation of Tenure-Track Faculty

In a disturbing number of Ombuds cases, unsuccessful candidates for P & T were startled by the lack of support they received, even at the department level where many opportunities for candor should have occurred throughout the probationary process. While all tenure-track faculty members have a responsibility to ensure they understand the expectations for which they will be evaluated, it is our perception that another cause of the problem is the lack of candor on the part of tenured faculty members, the candidate's mentor, and/or the candidate's department head. It is particularly easy for those who have been a part of the university for many years to forget the implicit aspects of many standards.

Recommendations.

3.1 Department heads and tenured faculty should carefully review annual retention letters before they are shared with tenure-track faculty members to ensure feedback is candid and complete, based on notes taken during the review meeting. (See the nine items listed in the *Good Practice* document as what *Every Tenure-Track Faculty Member Deserves*, p. 20.)

3.2 Department Heads and mentors should meet individually with the tenure-track faculty member to discuss the annual retention report and ensure understanding.

4. Caring for Unsuccessful Candidates

Faculty members who shared their unsuccessful P & T cases with Ombudspersons reported little if any effort on behalf of colleagues and administrators to assist them with their transition out of the university. Some of these faculty members received support from others, but it was usually focused on deciding whether to appeal the decision or how to appeal the decision to deny promotion and/or tenure. We wish to point out that unsuccessful candidates who are cared for during their transition are less likely to seek Ombuds services.

Recommendations.

4.1 The administration should encourage department heads and faculty to become aware of ways they can care for unsuccessful candidates. We are impressed with the eight possibilities listed on page 23 of the *Good Practice* document. We believe these

types of assistance can ease the transition for the unsuccessful candidate as well as his or her colleagues.

4.2 Department heads should ensure that actions are taken within the department to care for unsuccessful candidates.

5. Selection and Retention of Faculty Mentors

We have observed in numerous cases the negative impact of mentors who are not providing adequate service to a junior faculty member or with whom they do not feel compatible. In some cases, junior faculty members have reported to Ombudspersons that they are unaware of the opportunity to change mentors—or believe they will face repercussions if they request a change. Some are unaware of services they should receive from a mentor, including frequency of meetings, depth of information provided, and the quality of communication.

Recommendation.

5.1 Department Heads should monitor the quality of mentoring and the compatibility of the mentor and mentee. They should clearly explain to all faculty members that a change in mentors is to be expected from time to time and should never be held against the mentee. In some cases, they might recommend a junior faculty member have two mentors.

6. Careful Investigation for Allegation of Misconduct or Poor Performance

In some Ombuds cases, faculty members received notification of documents containing allegation of poor performance and/or misconduct when a more in-depth investigation might have revealed lack of evidence or no support for the allegations. These documents became a part of the faculty members' personnel records and resulted in negative situations that might have been avoided.

Recommendation.

6.1 Administrators should seek adequate evidence for allegations before committing them to written documents. Mistakes of this nature should be avoided.

7. Consistent use of Written Policy Specific to Faculty Positions

One case focused on written policy related to one type of faculty position being used to make decisions regarding faculty in another type of position. Upon further investigation, we learned that the policy was not being consistently applied across campus.

Recommendation.

7.1 Policy should be applied consistently across campus, and policy related to one type of faculty position should not be used.

Part II
Update on 2005-2006 Faculty Ombuds Office Report

During the 2006/2007 academic year, the Faculty Senate Faculty Affairs Committee met with Ombudspersons on several occasions to discuss the Ombuds Annual Report and to followup with the Provost's Office based on these recommendations. The Ombudspersons also met with Provost Holub and Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Susan Martin, and briefly discussed certain aspects of the report. In addition, the Ombudspersons offered to meet with administrators, including deans and department heads, but no interaction took place during administrative meetings or retreats. Changes are noted below in relation to each of the recommendations listed in the 2005-2006 Ombuds report. (Note: The entire report for 2005/2006 is on the Ombuds Office webpage and contains a discussion of each issue and elaboration of recommendations.)

1. Recommendations re issues with bylaws.

The Ombudspersons recommended that all departments be required to update bylaws and that department heads provide assurances that these bylaws are in compliance with the *Faculty Handbook* and the *Faculty Evaluation Manual*. It may be helpful if the Faculty Senate Faculty Affairs Committee and/or the Provost's Office monitors this effort.

2. Recommendations re lack of explicit procedures for the sharing of P & T reports with candidates and subsequent responses and/or correction of inaccuracies in these reports.

The Ombudspersons recommended that explicit procedures be developed and stated in the *Faculty Evaluation Manual*. We further recommended that every written report (by the department head, dean, and faculty review committees at the department and college level) be shared with the faculty member within 24 hours of its completion, including the faculty review committee vote and that a time limit be stated for when the faculty member can respond in writing, in order that this response could be added to the dossier before it goes to the next level. Further, we recommended that explicit procedures be developed for the correction of inaccurate facts in these reports prior to their review at the next level. This issue was addressed by the Provost's Office before the time the Promotion and Tenure process was underway in fall 2006. In all P & T cases handled by Ombudspersons during 2006/2007, we believe all faculty members were informed in a timely manner about reviews at each level and were given adequate time to write a response and/or include a response from appropriate others prior to the next level of review. One of our cases did address the fairness of the time limit for a faculty member to respond, as discussed in Part I of this report.

3. Recommendation to conduct exit interviews with faculty members leaving the university to accept positions at universities of equal or better standing and to monitor evaluations of Department Heads in relation to their support of junior faculty members.

The Faculty Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate should consider establishing a system for conducting such interviews, at least on a random basis. Department heads and deans should conduct exit interviews on a regular basis. Professional development should be provided annually for mentors and department heads. Any department with a consistent record of losing junior faculty members should receive extra assistance in determining whether a problem exists and how to address such a problem. Further, the Faculty Senate

should monitor the annual and 5-year in-depth evaluation of department heads, based on guidelines in the Faculty Handbook.

4. Recommendation to develop a consistent, written policy regarding full-time instructors' admittance to graduate programs. There has been inconsistent use of policy with instructors that is stated as applicable only to tenure-track and tenured faculty.

To our knowledge, no action was taken on this recommendation, and an instructor was denied admission to the graduate school without any clear, consistent policy. Other full-time instructors in at least one other college have been allowed and in at least one case, strongly encouraged, to pursue doctoral degrees in the programs in which they teach. In 2007, the instructor who had been denied admission appealed the action taken by the Graduate School and was once again denied. Efforts are now underway to have appropriate committees examine the policy and determine whether it should apply to instructors, whether exceptions should be granted under certain conditions, and whether the policy should be rewritten to explicitly include instructors.

5. Recommendation that faculty members be given an opportunity to share their perspectives concerning problems in job performance prior to enactment of changes in duties.

The Ombudspersons did not have any cases dealing directly with this issue in 2006/2007. This type of situation is likely rare, but we do feel a need to report its occurrence and request attention to this issue. To our knowledge, no action has been taken on this matter.

6. Recommendation that the Faculty Senate and the Provost's Office work together to establish policy concerning the situations in which negotiated agreements between a faculty member and an administrator should be seen as an agreement between the faculty member and the administrator acting in that position, which would result in agreements that should be honored at a later time by another person in that position.

No new cases occurred regarding this issue.

7. Issues regarding Annual Evaluation of Faculty Members.

- 7.1. Recommendation that administrators communicate standards for evaluation in several modalities and over time--especially when changes in evaluation standards occur. Conducting regularly scheduled departmental meetings and building a culture of faculty responsibility to attend such meetings can further communication, especially if faculty members are actively engaged in discussing such changes in standards.

No action has been taken of which we are aware.

- 7.2. Recommendation that faculty members be rewarded in annual reviews for appropriate engagement in activities that benefit the university directly and the department indirectly. For senior faculty in particular, there is a natural evolution of development and responsibility felt and acted upon that should be honored.

No action has been taken of which we are aware.

- 7.3. Recommendation that departmental faculty members and heads think carefully about the use of review committees in annual faculty evaluations. Efforts should be made to ensure faculty members are evaluated by faculty of the same rank or higher.

No action to ensure this is happening consistently across campus has been taken of which we are aware.

- 7.4. Recommendation that every effort be made to ensure faculty members understand the level of support (or lack of it) they receive in annual evaluations. Clear communication should not be assumed and can only be determined through direct interaction with the faculty member to assess his/her perceptions regarding the evaluation report.

This issue continues to be of concern, based on Ombuds cases. It continues to warrant considerable attention—in our efforts to be fair and consistent.

- 7.5. Recommendation that faculty members be ranked according to their performance on annual goals and workload percentages negotiated with their department heads.

They should not be encouraged to reduce activities in one of the areas of teaching, scholarship, or service unless they continue to have an equal opportunity to be ranked high and receive merit pay. While this may be a problem in a minority of departments, efforts need to be made to ensure the Faculty Handbook policy regarding diversity of workload be upheld in all departments.

Addendum to the Faculty Ombuds Office Annual Report 2006/2007
Ombudspersons' Perspective on Restructuring of the Faculty Ombuds Office
September 10, 2007
Katherine Greenberg, Joanne Hall, & Julia Malia

Late spring 2007, the Provost met with the three current Ombudspersons and two Faculty Senate Officers to discuss the Provost's insistence that the Ombuds Office be restructured, including the method of compensation for services. Prior to this meeting, the Provost had introduced a motion in the Faculty Senate to change the wording in the Faculty Handbook, potentially reducing the number of Faculty Ombudspersons from three to "two or more," but this motion was voted down by the Senators. After much personal reflection and extended communication, we found our ability to function effectively compromised because of the proposed changes and the deeper issues behind them. As a result, each of us individually decided to resign, effective after the conclusion of our current cases. In August 2007, the Provost and Faculty Senate Officers decided to explore best practices at other universities and develop an alternative plan for restructuring this office. We commend the Faculty Senate and the Provost for their efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Ombuds Office. The purpose of this addendum to our annual report is to provide our perspective and recommendations for the restructuring that will be required.

Our knowledge and experience as Ombudspersons convinces us that an Ombuds Office can contribute greatly to ongoing improvement of relationships between the faculty and the administration and to the refinement of promotion and tenure procedures that will ensure fairness in evaluation and accountability for high quality teaching, scholarship, and service befitting a Research 1, Land Grant University. We also believe this potential will be jeopardized unless changes occur to strengthen the neutrality of the Ombudspersons and to establish procedures to encourage better communication between Ombudspersons and administrators, including department heads, deans, and central administrators. The three of us are available to discuss these issues and our recommendations with the administration and the faculty.

Ombudspersons, according to policy in our Faculty Handbook, are expected to be neutral, informal mediators who do not advocate for either the faculty or the administration. They serve as facilitators who help faculty members and administrators uncover their personal assumptions about problem situations and understand the perspectives of the others. This often leads to the resolution of issues that otherwise would continue to cause problems for individuals, whether faculty members or administrators, as well as the university. In order for the university to receive these benefits, Ombudspersons must possess specialized skills in facilitation, but these skills are only effective when all those involved are willing to look deeply at issues with an open attitude and an appreciation and respect for the Ombuds Office.

While the current Ombudspersons are faculty members, the Ombudsperson position is not that of a faculty member advocating for the faculty. The role will not be well served by faculty members choosing this position as a means of completing their service requirements to the university. Rather, it is a position for which we each were invited and encouraged to apply because of our expertise in facilitation and our standing within the university—and selected for a position outside of our fulltime workload, a role that is neither an administrative position nor a faculty position.

Some brief background information will contextualize key issues and recommendations. The Ombuds Office began operation shortly after the revised Faculty Handbook was approved in 2004. During the first 2 years of operation, the Ombudspersons explored various practices while serving faculty members who presented cases. They also began to meet regularly with Provost Office staff. Katherine Greenberg became an Ombudsperson in August 2005. Joanne Hall and Julia Malia became Ombudspersons in April 2006. When the three of us began working together, we arranged meetings with officials from the Provost's Office, the Office of Equity and Diversity, and the General Counsel's Office, as well as with a former, highly experienced UT Ombudsperson, Suzanne Kurth, who served both faculty and students under a different organization of the Ombuds Office that ended in the late 1990s. We also explored best practices at other universities and then developed documents, currently available on our university webpage, which include the "Faculty Ombuds Office Common Practices" document that provides information about our procedures and services based on policy presented in the Faculty Handbook. In October 2006, the three of us presented to the Faculty Senate and Provost Office the first Ombuds Office Annual Report, which contained general issues and recommendations based on 18 cases from August 2005 – April 2006. The present document is an addendum to our second annual report that we presented at the Faculty Senate Retreat on Friday, September 7 of this year. The second annual report describes general issues and recommendations based on 25 cases from summer 2006 through summer 2007, as well as compares UT promotion and tenure policy and procedures with those recommended in a 2000 document of the American Council on Education, the American Association of University Professors, and the United Educators Insurance Risk Retention Group: *Good Practice in Tenure Evaluation*.

In May and June of 2007, we were informed that the role of Ombudspersons was being restructured and, henceforth, would be considered as faculty service to the university with compensation determined based on that received by faculty teaching a 1-hour freshman course each semester. On reflection, we were certain this would create a negative impact on the perception of Ombudspersons by the faculty and the administration. Our discussions led to a realization that, in some ways, our Office already has been eroded based on numerous administrators' actions related to our cases; the administrators' actions we are referring to will be described below. As a result of this realization, we believed our only alternative was to submit our resignations.

We find that the Ombuds role more and more frequently has been limited to that of assisting faculty members in reflecting on issues and gathering and sharing relevant information they may not otherwise have available to them. This is a very important part of the Ombuds role, and, in most cases, faculty members who have come to us have been open to considering alternate points of view regarding their issues. We have observed, however, a diminished willingness on the part of administrators to engage in open exploration of issues. Rather, they often have taken a particular position and refused to consider other options. As a result, our neutral role of facilitating between faculty and administrators is thwarted. It would be inappropriate for us to hold any expectation about how problems will be resolved in any of our cases—and we do not. However, based upon our experience in facilitation, however, we know that problems more frequently will be resolved if administrators as well as faculty members listen to and are willing to be influenced by other perspectives, explore assumptions, and seriously consider alternative actions.

We do not believe the administrators with whom we have experienced this lack of openness are necessarily intentional in such actions. Rather, we believe the problem is much more subtle: that administrators do not understand the role of Ombudspersons and that the atmosphere at our university is increasingly one of diminished shared governance and mutual suspicion or cynicism. It is frustrating to note that, although we have repeatedly offered to participate in meetings with administrators at all levels to discuss the role of the Ombuds Office as well as our annual reports and recommendations, we have yet to be invited to any official meetings with any group or individual administrator to discuss the kinds of issues with which they are most directly involved. At the same time, we have not been invited to formally share our perspectives during workshops for faculty mentors, promotion and tenure workshops, or administrative retreats and strategic planning sessions. We, of course, do interact with administrators involved in cases if this option is requested by faculty members, and we have participated in fairly regular meetings with the Provost and Senior Vice-Provost, at either our request or theirs, but these conversations are one or two steps removed from issues at the Department Head or Dean levels. We have requested and been invited to present our perspectives at two Faculty Senate meetings and one Faculty Senate Retreat. And we are pleased that the Faculty Affairs Committee invited us to discuss our 2005/2006 recommendations and then worked with the Senior Vice Provost, Susan Martin, to take action on some of our recommendations. (See the Ombuds Office Annual Report, Part II, 2006/2007.) The problem is that most administrators have never engaged us in an in-depth conversation about the role of Ombudspersons, the issues about which we are well informed, and recommendations we offer based on the unique perspective we develop as we attempt to understand all sides of each issue. Lack of communication with most administrators has resulted in missed opportunities to look openly at individual faculty issues and misperceptions regarding our insights.

Ombudspersons recommendations for restructuring the Faculty Ombuds Office

1. Ensure policy separating the Ombuds' position from that of the administration or faculty.
2. Maintain the strict confidentiality that the Ombuds Office has established regarding cases, as outlined in the Ombuds Office Common Practices.
3. Ensure that any person appointed as an Ombudsperson has well developed skills and experience in facilitation and encourage faculty members and administrators to utilize this Office for informal conflict resolution as appropriate in some Ombuds cases.
4. Ensure that an annual report from the Ombuds Office is widely disseminated through email to faculty and administrators and placement on the Ombuds Office website. The report should describe (without revealing individual cases) general issues and recommendations from the Ombudspersons related to current and recent cases. The report also should include an update on university changes related to recommendations discussed in the report from the previous year.
5. Provide regular, formal opportunities for Ombudspersons to engage faculty and administrators at all levels in discussing the role of Ombudspersons, general issues, perceptions held by faculty members and administrators, and Ombudspersons' recommendations. In order to ensure their importance at a level equal with other agenda items and expected attention, these interactions should be scheduled annually as a part of traditional meetings and/or retreats of the Faculty Senate and councils of the Chancellor, Provost, and Deans.
6. Charge the Faculty Affairs Committee with exploring the recommendations in the annual report with appropriate members of the Provost's Office and the Ombudspersons.
7. Establish a budget for the Ombuds Office, including funds to pay for adequate support staff, a meeting room that protects confidentiality, Ombudspersons' participation in national and regional Ombuds organizations, initial and in-service training opportunities, and Red Dot parking privileges.