

March 31, 1998
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES AND RULES
Establishment of a new position

University Ombudsman

(Legislative)

[Implementation Date: Upon Passage by the Senate]

INTRODUCTION

Since 1973 each college and campus within Penn State has had an ombudsman whose role is set forth in HR-76, Selection and Responsibilities of Ombudsmen. For the most part, these 33 ombudsmen have functioned effectively over the years to assist in the informal resolution of differences and to serve as conciliators and advisors. In most instances the Senate Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities will not address a case until a local ombudsman has first addressed it. The Vice-Chair of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs has served as the unofficial coordinator of the Ombudsmen, and the Faculty Affairs Committee has sponsored a biennial workshop for them. In some instances the Executive Secretary of the Senate has served as a conduit of information for the Ombudsmen and as an unofficial contact person.

The Committee on Committees and Rules reviewed the current ad hoc approach to this coordination and training of the ombudsmen. Realizing the potentially crucial role that these individuals play in attempting to resolve conflicts at an early stage, the committee has concluded that more consistent and institutionalized coordination of the ombudsmen is warranted. Consequently, the Committee proposes the creation of a new position, University Ombudsman. This individual would function as a coordinator/facilitator and clearinghouse of information for the other ombudsmen. The University Ombudsman would be responsible for the biennial workshops and would be the university-level contact person for the other ombudsmen. As such, he/she would maintain liaison with the Provost's Office, the Office of Human Resources, the Senate Office, and the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs. The University Ombudsman would report to the Senate through the Senate Council. The University Ombudsman would not serve in any appeal capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Amend the Standing Rules, Article III, Other Functions of the Senate, by the addition of a new Section 9:

University Ombudsman:

(a) Eligibility: Current or emeritus faculty member.

b. Election: By the Senate Council for a term of four (4) years (renewable). While University Ombudsman, the incumbent may not serve on the Standing Joint Committee on Tenure, the Senate Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities, or the University Promotion and Tenure Review Committee.

(c) Duties: The University Ombudsman shall coordinate the training of all college and campus ombudsmen; shall provide for the appropriate dissemination of information among the various college and campus ombudsmen; and shall be the university-level contact for the various college and campus ombudsmen. The University Ombudsman shall report periodically to the Senate Council and shall maintain liaison with the Office of the University Provost, the Office of Human Resources and the Senate Office. The University Ombudsman shall have no appeal function.

[the current Section 9 shall be renumbered Section 10]

Recommendation 2:

In consultation with the Senate Committee on Committees and Rules, the Office of Human Resources shall revise HR-76 to reflect this change in the Standing Rules.

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