



## EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

*Serving Kentuckians Since 1906*

Faculty / Staff Ombud  
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### EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY FACULTY STAFF OMBUD QUARTLERY REPORT FIRST QUARTER 2017

April 24, 2017

This institution established an Ombud to help improve the work life of faculty and staff through alternative dispute resolution of job related conflicts. The Office of the Ombud opened January 10, 2017, operating three days per week. Much of the work this quarter is setting up the office. The staff of the University's other complaint venues have been helpful and welcoming as we define complementary roles. Many campus organizations provided opportunities for outreach.

In the first quarter of 2017 the Office was available for consultation thirty-two days. During that time fourteen issues were brought forward. Ten were brought by faculty and four by staff. Of those cases twelve have been resolved, one is held for further information and one is in process. The average time to resolution is 3.18 days.

The most common complaint topic was harassment or bullying, implicated in five of the fourteen cases. As much as we would like to believe that bullying is a minor school yard issue, that simply is not true. When the basis is membership in a protected class, the behavior is against the law. If the behavior is not motivated by such membership, bullies have felt free to abuse their targets. The behavior is just as destructive to the target in an unprotected class, and it poisons the work environment. Bullying behavior begins at a young age. As the bully learns that the aggressive, abusive, outrageous words and actions are rewarded, those very same behaviors are reinforced. In a mild state bullying is deemed rude or ill-mannered; at the other extreme it is hostile, threatening, intimidating and violent. In the workplace bullying reduces productivity, increases absenteeism, inhibits systems improvement and leads to the loss of valuable employees, resulting in expense to the employer. Eastern Kentucky University is not unique. Workplace bullying is so prevalent there are organizations that study, quantify and report, even some dedicated to this aggressive behavior in higher education. EKU has recognized the problem and drafted a policy to prohibit workplace bullying.

The totality of issues presented lead to the conclusion that front line supervisors are not equipped to address such behavior by their colleagues. Indeed, many have no background or training in managing people, having developed expertise in their respective fields. Working with Human Resources, the Provost Council and Chairs Committee, we are developing a series of very short presentations and exercises, to be incorporated into existing meetings, to build the management toolbox for front line supervisors both faculty and staff. While we work on resolving the existing issues on an individual basis, we hope to effect systemic improvement by empowering supervisors to shape the work behavior of the people working for them.

I wish to acknowledge and thank the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Ombud Framework Committee for its continued work to create a charter to define and describe the function of this office. The members of this committee, both faculty and staff, are addressing the task with diligence and professionalism. The Charter, when adopted, will inform the ECU community and future staff of this office on the nature, standards and limitations of the Ombud on this campus.

Faculty/Staff Ombud Activity Log First Quarter, 2017

Date Received	Faculty or Staff	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Date Resolved
1/23/17	Faculty	Coaching/Mentoring	Compensation		1/23/2017
1/24/17	Faculty	Coaching/Mentoring	Bullying	Dept Climate	1/30/2017
1/24/17	Faculty	Coaching/Mentoring	Procedural Violation		1/24/2017
2/6/17	Faculty	Coaching/Mentoring	Bullying		4/10/2017
2/15/17	Faculty	Coaching/Mentoring	Reputation	Compensation	3/6/2017
2/15/17	Staff	Conflict of Interest			
2/21/17	Faculty	Tenure	Coaching/Mentoring		2/21/2017
2/28/17	Staff	Dept Climate	Coaching/Mentoring	Mental Health Issues	2/28/2017
3/6/17	Faculty	Coaching/Mentoring	Bullying	Dept Climate	3/8/2017
3/8/17	Staff	Leadership & Mgmt	Job Recruitment Process		3/9/2017
3/20/17	Faculty	Harassment			3/20/2017
3/21/17	Staff	Harassment	Interpersonal		
3/21/17	Faculty	Termination/Non-Renewal			3/28/2017
3/28/17	Faculty	Tenure	Application of Rules		3/28/2017