



**Faculty Ombuds Program  
Annual Report 2015-2016**

**Prepared by  
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## Faculty Ombuds Program

### Annual Report 2015-2016

#### Summary

#### Highlights

- Dr. Moan attended the Annual convention of the International Ombudsman Association in April, 2016 in Seattle. Key contacts were made with Ombudsmen at other universities who can serve as colleagues and persons with whom to consult when necessary. In addition to receiving continuing education and training a presentation was made entitled Identifying and Meeting the Needs of Contingent Faculty.
- Meetings were held with key persons in the university community to maintain personal contacts and to review services being offered through the Faculty Ombuds Program (FOP).
- During the 2015-2016 academic year sixty-seven (67) total contacts were made with the FOP representing forty-four unique individuals. The number of contacts is a 24% increase in the total number of contacts in comparison with the previous academic year.
- The number of contacts with the FOP coordinator has risen consistently since 2011.
- The majority of the faculty visitors were full-time faculty. This is a substantial change from the two previous years.
- Visitors contacted the FOP with a greater variety of concerns than were presented in previous years; although the largest category of concern continues to be peer and colleague relations (33%), and evaluation-related concerns continue to be the second most frequently mentioned concern (23%). Other concerns included issues related to career progression, organization/unit values, ethics and standards, administrative issues, and compensation questions.
- Individual consultation was the primary intervention. In most cases, problem-solving strategies or clarification of university policies were the main forms of service offered. Referral to other campus resources was recommended in sixteen (16) cases. In seven (7) situations a facilitated discussion was undertaken involving the original visitor and another party or parties with whom they were in conflict. These numbers are similar to those in the 2014-2015 Annual Report. Eighteen (18) total persons participated in the facilitated discussions, some of which involved more than two participants.
- Collaborative efforts continue with the Faculty Professional Development Program to provide presentations on topics of interest including peer relationships and maintaining boundaries in the workplace.

## **Background of the Faculty Ombudsman Program at Northern Arizona University**

Academic year 2016-2017 marks the continuation of services provided to faculty through the services of an Ombudsman. These services have been offered to various constituencies at Northern Arizona University for over twenty years. The initial program served faculty only but over time, the Ombudsman Office expanded to provide services to all segments of the university community. The scope of services offered eventually reached its apex during the 1999-2000 academic year when nearly 700 contacts were made with the office, which was staffed by two full-time ombudsmen, one full-time staff member, and a cadre of faculty volunteers who were trained in mediation techniques and who were assigned to mediate faculty disputes. During this time services were available to faculty, classified staff, students, and outside parties in their dealings with university personnel. Due to budgetary and other concerns, funding to the Ombudsman program was reduced which resulted in staff reductions and limits on the scope of services. Ombudsman services were not offered at all from 2004-2006. The Faculty Ombudsman Program in its present form was re-established in 2006 with a half-time position under the direction of Dr. Gary Buckley. The Faculty Ombuds Program (FOP) is funded through the Provost's Office. Dr. Phoebe Morgan served as the Coordinator of the program from 2008-2011, succeeded by Dr. Michael Ketterer who served as coordinator from 2011-2013. The present coordinator, Dr. Eugene Moan, was appointed to the coordinator position in the summer of 2013 and continues to serve in this role.

## **Present status of the Faculty Ombuds Program**

Dr. Moan is a full professor in the Educational Psychology Department of the College of Education and has been employed in various roles at NAU since 1981. Dr. Moan is a licensed psychologist trained in mediation through Dispute Resolution Services and has completed training as an Ombudsman through the International Ombudsman Association, of which he is an associate member. The coordinator's position continues to be a half-time appointment. Services are available to all full-time and part-time faculty whether based on the Mountain Campus or at other locations. The program office is located in room 230 of Peterson Hall, a private location outside of the main flow of university traffic.

Services of the Faculty Ombuds Program are offered under the Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). These services follow the IOA tenets of being 1) neutral, that is not advocating for a person or outcome but rather advocating for a fair process in all situations, 2) informal, with concerns being addressed outside of other processes of record (such as the Equity and Access office, etc.), 3) confidential, unless that confidentiality is waived by the party seeking services or if an eminent threat is being made that would disrupt the safety of the university community, and 4) independent, in that the Coordinator functions outside of the usual university administrative channels. Recipients of services through the FOP come voluntarily. The Coordinator has no power to demand that any party participate in services offered. The FOP is not an office of record and no written notes concerning the issues presented by any visitor to the office are kept. The present Annual Report is the only documentation of services provided through the FOP during a given academic year.

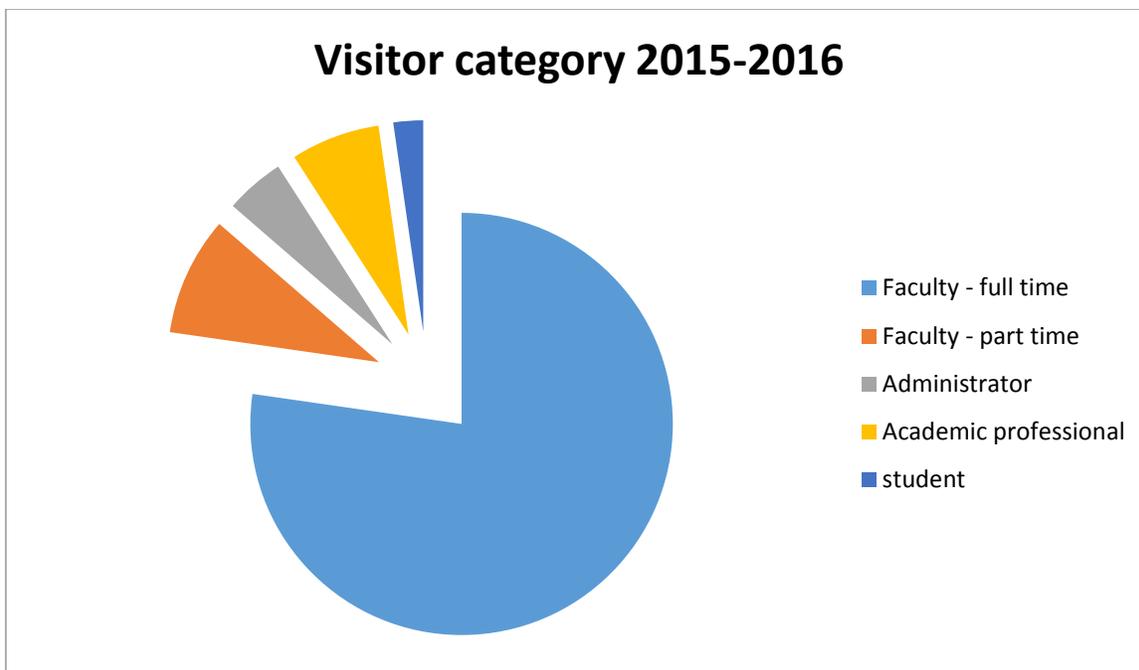
### **Faculty Ombuds Office activities 2015-2016**

Since the effective operation of an Ombudsman program involves collaboration and referral to other resources on campus, effort is placed on establishing and maintaining direct personal contact with key persons on the Northern Arizona University campus. During the 2015-2016 academic year, in-person meetings were held with the following offices and persons:

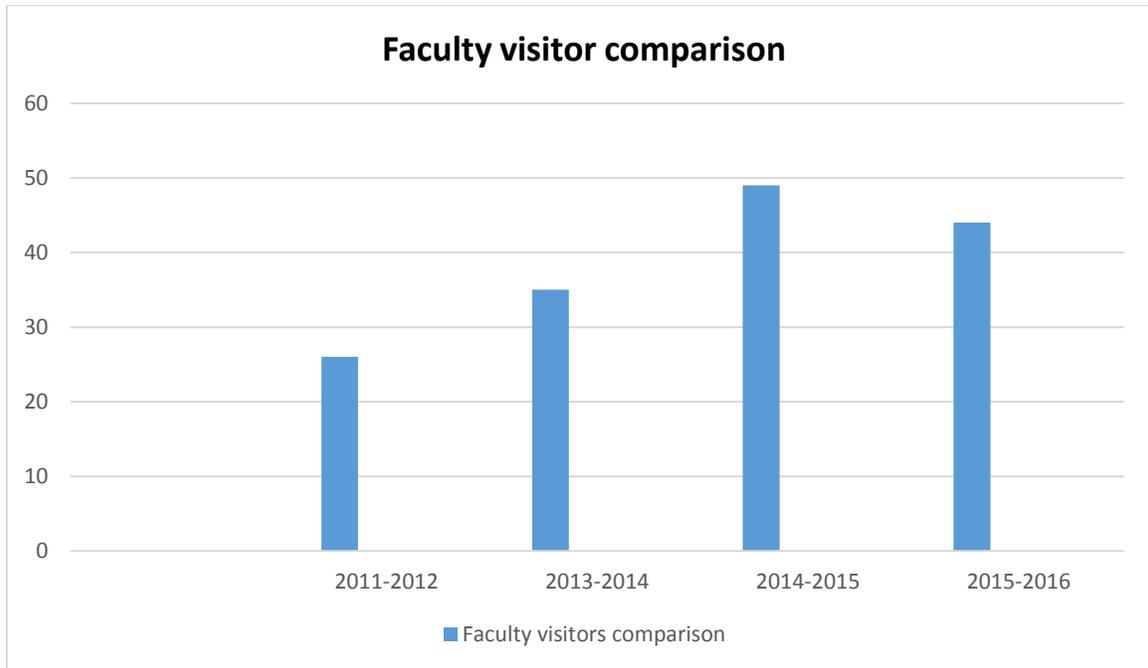
<b>Contacts with key parties 2015-2016</b>
Meeting with Vice Provost Daniel Kain to outline duties and expectations
Meeting with Equity and Access staff – Priscilla Mills, Pam Heinonen and Amanda Loveless
Meeting with Employee Assistance and Wellness director Betsy Kerr and staff
Meeting with Human Resources director Diane Verkest
Videotaped presentation to Faculty Senate on highlights of the Annual Report
Presentation to the Academic Chairs Council
Presentation to the Provost’s Academic Leadership Council

Office hours were kept consistent with those established in the previous year. In addition, all calls are returned within 24 hours and individual appointments can be made at a time that is convenient for the faculty member seeking services. Over the course of the 2015 – 2016 academic year, sixty-seven (67) total contacts were made with the FOP representing forty-four (44) unique individuals. Faculty members constituted the largest category of persons who contacted the FOP for assistance (38), followed by academic professionals (3), administrators (2) and students (1). Thirty-four (34) of the faculty members who made contact with the FOP were full-time, four (4) were part-time. It is interesting to note that while services are not provided to parties other than faculty, contacts continue to be made with the FOP from various concerned parties. This is consistent with observations made in previous annual reports. In cases of contact from persons who were not faculty, the concerns of the visitor were noted and referrals to other resources were made. There were no contacts from classified staff members during the 2015-2016 academic year.

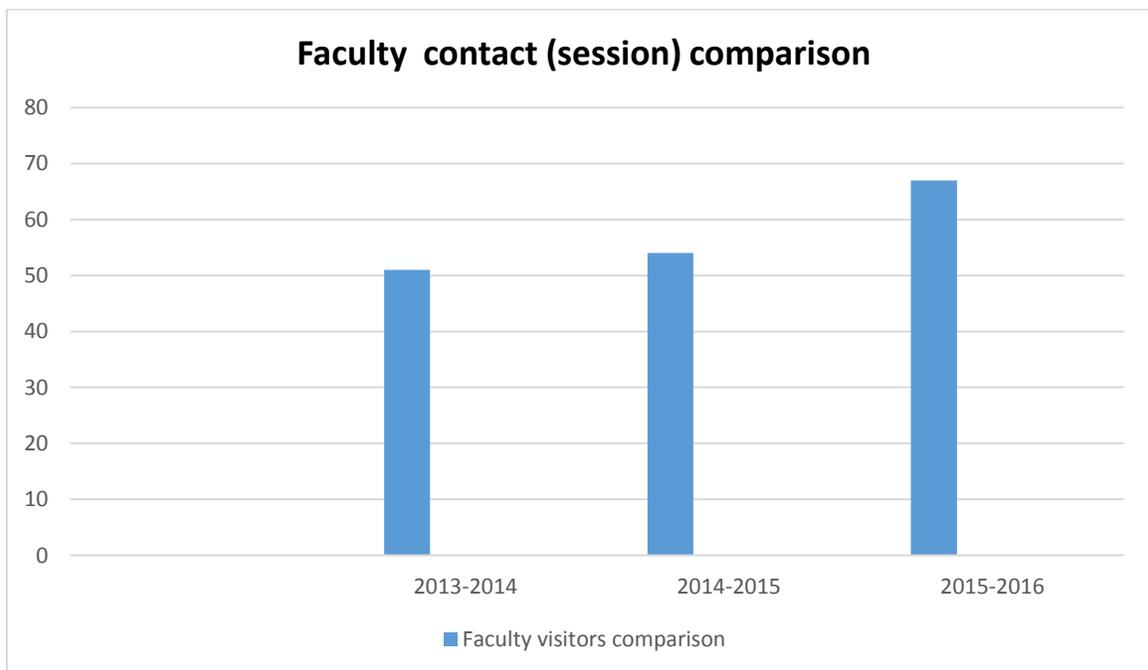
A chart depicting the composition of visitors to the FOP is found on the next page



The number of faculty contacts was an increase over the numbers seen in the 2013-2014 academic year when thirty-five (35) individual faculty members had contact with the FOP but a slight decrease from 2014-2015. A portion of this increase in 2014-2015 was due to new activities undertaken during that year when the FOP began facilitation of discussion with groups of faculty who were expressing similar concerns within their academic unit. A slightly lower total number of faculty were seen during the 2015-2016 year because there were fewer participants in meetings involving groups of faculty. During the 2015-2016 academic year, 89.4% of the faculty contacts involved full-time personnel. This represents a decrease in the percentage of part-time vs. full-time faculty visitors to the FOP. While the number of part-time faculty visitors decreased, there may have been an increase in the number of non-tenure track vs. tenure track faculty visitors. To document this possible trend, data on the tenure status of full-time faculty visitors is now being kept and will be reported in next year's annual report. The next chart shows the increase in visitors in contact with the FOP. Data for 2012-2013 is not available.



The following chart shows the number of faculty contacts with the FOP over the past three years.



### Comparison to other institutions

Information regarding the scope of ombuds services and utilization patterns at other academic institutions can be difficult to obtain. Such information may be contained in the annual reports

of the Ombuds offices but direct comparisons are difficult to make due to a number of factors. Some university Ombuds offices serve only faculty while others serve the entire university community. Some offices operate on a full-time basis and have multiple staff while others such as ours at NAU have only one part-time ombudsman.

Despite these limitations, the Ombudsman's Office of the University of South Carolina has conducted an informal survey of ombuds programs at Carnegie Foundation Tier I institutions for the past eight years. Their report states that in the sample of thirty-six schools the number of faculty visitors per year to the ombuds offices averages forty-nine. (University Ombudsman Annual Report-University of South Carolina. Retrieved September 12, 2016 at: <http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/doc/2014-2015NinthAnnualReportUniversityOmbudsUSC.pdf>).

The utilization of the FOP at NAU appears to be in line with patterns seen at other academic institutions.

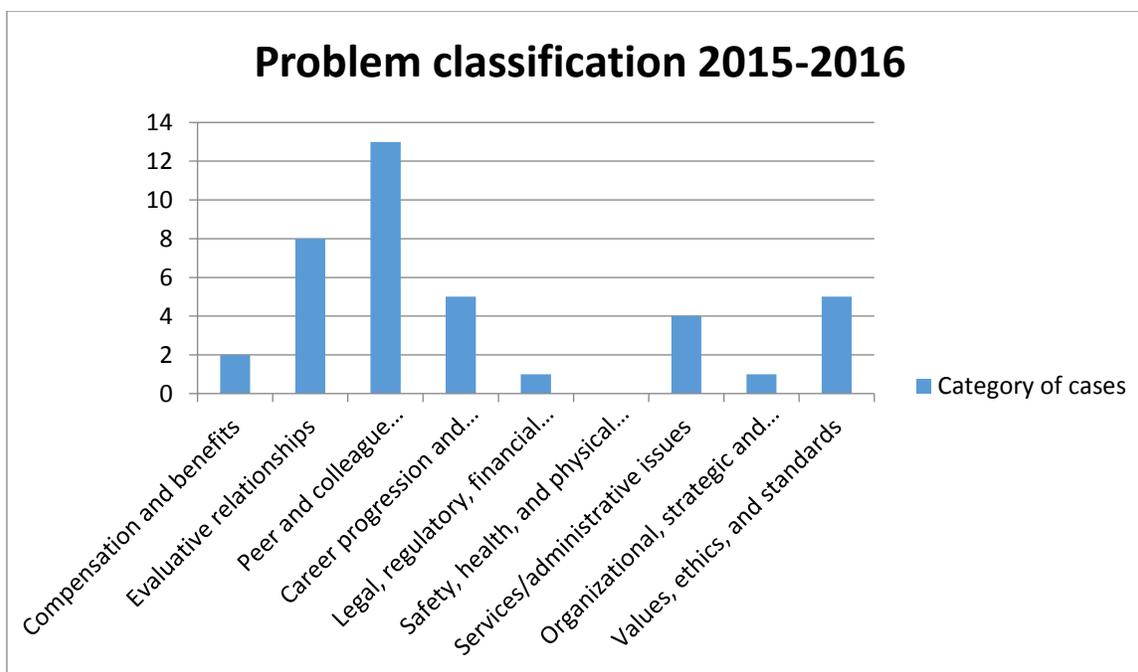
### **Issues of Diversity**

An inquiry was directed to the FOP coordinator about whether the services of the FOP meet the needs of racially and ethnically diverse segments of the faculty community and how many faculty of color are utilizing the services of the FOP. It is difficult to address this issue proactively because precise data to answer this question is not available for two reasons. Nearly all initial contacts with the FOP are made by telephone and a portion of these visitors are only provided services (including follow-up) through telephonic communications. Even for visitors who come into the FOP office in person, no demographic information or any other form of written record is made of their visit. Therefore, no data is obtained. This is in keeping with the confidential provisions of the Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). Faculty are only asked about their status as a faculty member to ensure that those receiving services fall within the charge of the program.

In looking at other Ombuds programs that do gather demographic data, the process almost always requires the faculty member to login and/or authenticate in order to access the demographic page. This impinges upon the confidentiality of those who have utilized the service. Additionally, providing the information would be voluntary and may not represent the actual demographics of the faculty utilizing the services of the FOP. If any faculty has questions or concerns about the FOP program they are welcome to contact the coordinator to discuss the issue.

### **Presenting issues**

The presenting issues of faculty and administrators who made contact with the FOP were recorded using the standardized classification system of the International Ombudsman Association. A comparison of presenting concerns is seen in the graph on the next page. The numbers in this chart exceed the total number of visitors because many visitors mention multiple concerns during the contact with the office.



The largest category of concern continues to involve peer and colleague interactions. The majority of these concerns involved the visitor's perception that they were being treated in an uncivil manner by another member of the university community. These concerns were usually addressed by either a problem-solving session involving the visitor who could then decide on a course of action or a facilitated conversation between the visitor and the other party. These sessions were always conducted in the privacy of the Ombuds office and each party was a voluntary participant. It is interesting and encouraging to note that over the past two years only one person who was invited to participate in such a discussion refused to be involved. This is interpreted to represent the kind of good will generally found on the NAU campus, even among persons who may be in disagreement with one another. It also supports the hypothesis that many persons would prefer to solve issues in an informal and confidential manner and not through the use of more formal processes.

"Evaluative processes and relationships," was once again the second largest category of concerns presented to the FOP. As with the previous year, many of these cases involved faculty who, although full-time employees, were not in tenure-track appointments. Issues pertaining to retention and salary were the most common concerns. Resolution of these cases generally involved clarifying personnel policies and procedures.

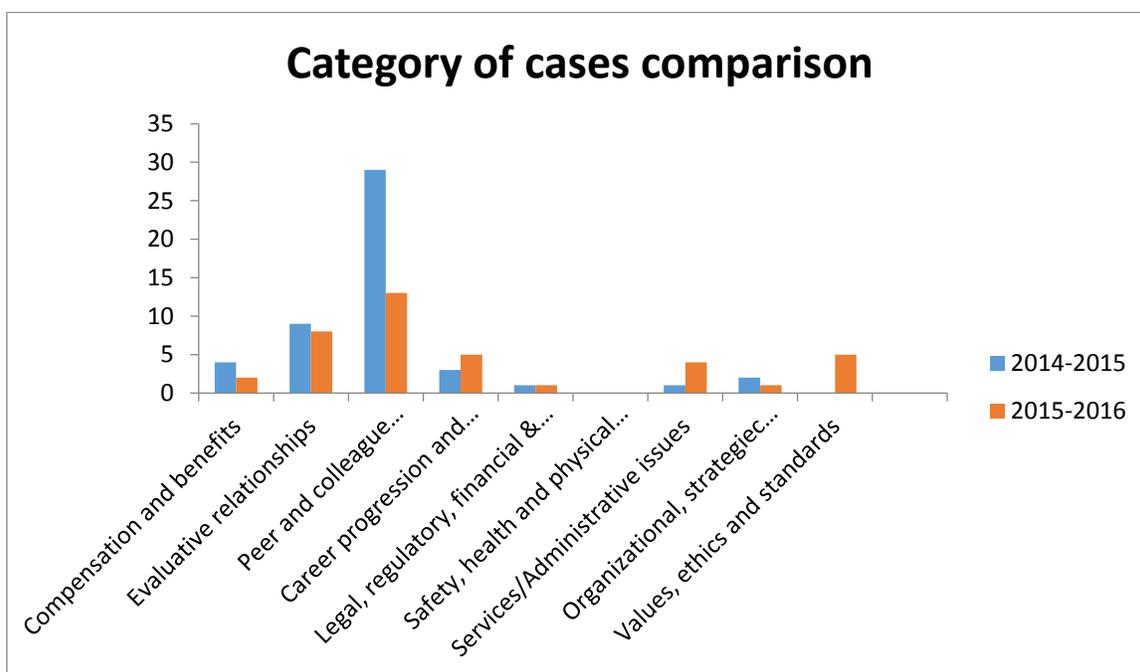
Career progression became the third largest category of concerns presented to the FOP during the 2015-2016 academic year. Issues pertaining to criteria for promotion were of concern for both tenure/tenure track and non-tenure track faculty.

Concern over administrative support for faculty efforts, rules and guidelines for the use of grant funds, and adherence to the stated university mission and goals were tied for the fourth most frequently cited visitor concern. These concerns generally involved proper use of grant funds or questions of appropriate support for faculty grant-related activities. Discussions with the grant administrator or relevant program administrator were generally sufficient to address these concerns. Even in cases where the visitor did not agree with the decision made, they generally left with an understanding of how the decision was made.

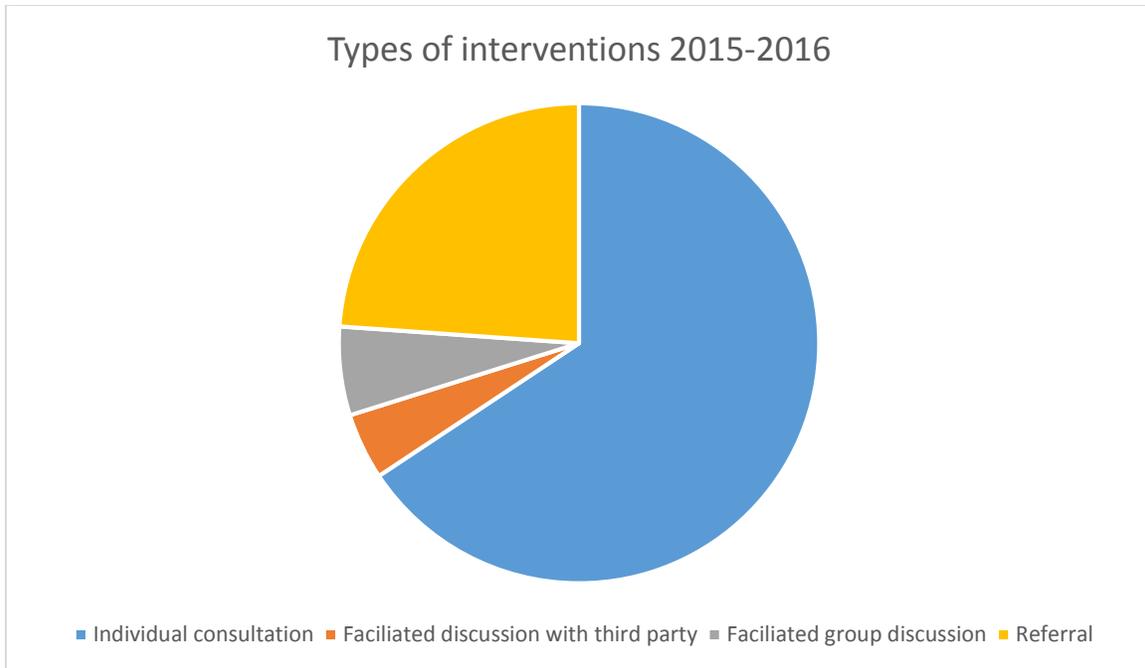
Compensation and benefits did not appear to be of as much concern to faculty this year as had been the case in the previous year. Since no merit pay was awarded last year, there may have been fewer reasons for faculty to question the fairness of their compensation.

### Prior year comparison

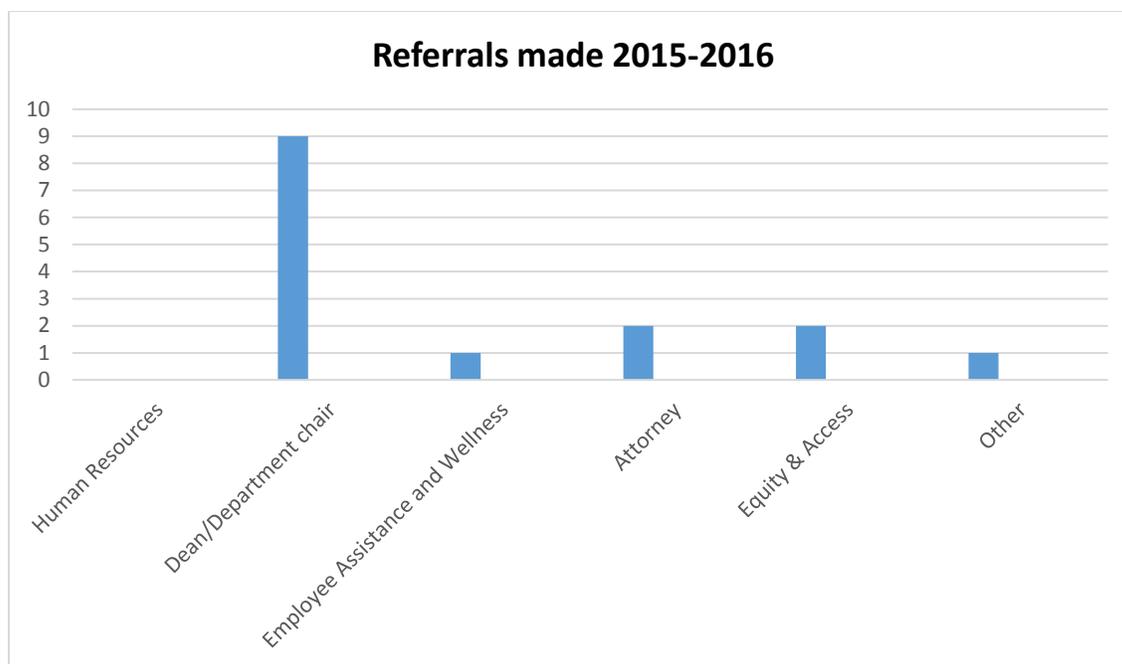
The following chart compares the distribution of problem classifications during the 2014-2015 academic year compared to the distribution of problem classifications seen during the 2015-2016 reporting year.



The types of interventions provided by the FOP during the past year are in the chart on the next page.



In the 2015-2016 academic year individual consultation was the primary intervention. This occurred in forty-four (44) cases. In most cases, problem-solving strategies or clarification of university policies were the main subject of the consultation. Referral to other campus resources was recommended in sixteen (16) cases. In seven (7) situations a facilitated discussion was undertaken involving the original visitor and another party or parties with whom they were in conflict. Three of these facilitated discussions involved the visitor and only one other person while the other four (4) of these facilitated discussions involved multiple participants. The total number of interventions exceeds the number of visitors because in some cases multiple means of addressing the issues presented by the visitor were utilized. For example, after an individual consultation, a referral to another campus resource may have been made. The chart below depicts offices to which faculty were referred.



In that many of the issues brought to the attention of the FOP involve conflict between parties, issues of evaluation procedures, and career progression, it is not unexpected to see that the main party to whom faculty members were referred were their department chair and/or the dean of their college.

### **Other activities of the FOP coordinator**

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the coordinator participated in a meeting of the Academic Chairs Council to review highlights of the annual report and to answer questions.

In cooperation with the Faculty Professional Development Program and the Productive Beginnings program, efforts continued on presenting workshops on topics relevant to new faculty. The topics of Colleagues and peers as allies in achieving your career goals and Maintaining appropriate boundaries in the workplace had previously been well received and the presentation on Colleagues as allies was done again during the past academic year. Discussions with the director of the Faculty Professional Development Program on development of additional topics of interest are ongoing.

In the spring semester I attended a meeting of the Contingent Faculty as an observer. This allowed me to hear their concerns and to make them aware of the services provided through the FOP.

In addition to the outreach activities, periodic meetings between the Faculty Ombudsman and the directors of other campus resource offices (Employee Assistance and Wellness, Equity and Access, Human Resources) and Vice Provost Kain were held to informally discuss issues that were being brought to the attention of each office. Rules of confidentiality were always followed in these meetings. This allows for identification of emerging issues that affect the university

community and the opportunity to implement some advanced planning to address these concerns. This also provides an opportunity for the involved parties to discuss resources and services that may be needed to address emerging campus issues.

In the past year the coordinator has continued to be involved with a statewide group of Ombudsmen who meet on a twice-yearly basis. Involvement in the state Ombudsman Association provides a much needed network of colleagues for the NAU Faculty Ombudsman and participating in these meetings establishes NAU as an active partner within the Ombuds community in Arizona. Through this group a liaison with the new Faculty Ombuds officer at the University of Arizona was established. We plan to make time quarterly to discuss concerns common to both campuses and to consult on best approaches for addressing faculty needs.

In April 2016 I attended the Annual convention of the International Ombudsman Association in Seattle. Key contacts were made with Ombudsman at other universities who can serve as colleagues and persons with whom to consult when necessary. In addition to receiving continuing education and training a presentation was made entitled Identifying and Meeting the Needs of Contingent Faculty.

### **Trends and implications**

As has been the case in the past, the majority of visitor concerns are in regard to issues that involve interactions with others in the work setting. This includes both peers and those to whom the faculty member reports such as department chairs and deans of colleges. The FOP has been an effective tool for addressing these concerns and providing assistance in undertaking sometimes difficult conversations between parties. The continued willingness of persons to work toward finding a fair and just resolution to the issues before them is commendable. This supports the need for an on-going and vibrant Faculty Ombuds Program.

Evaluative relationships and procedures continue to be of concern to faculty. Movement and processes for part-time instructors seeking pay increases is a particular concern. Clarification and delineation of these procedures would be helpful.

The issue of career progression is an increasingly cited reason for faculty visitors to seek services of the FOP. Non-tenure track faculty appear to be less knowledgeable about career advancement paths. The criteria for advancement and process for applying for promotion do not seem to be as well delineated for them as they are for the tenure track faculty. As the number of non-tenure track faculty continues to increase, these processes are expected to become more routine and defined.

Contact with the FOP by non-faculty members of the university community continue to be made. In these cases referral to other appropriate offices is made. Follow-up appointments are not provided.

A small number of contacts with the FOP continue to be made outside of the academic year. While the number per week is reduced in comparison to the school year, these contacts should not be ignored as they represent issues that faculty want to address before too much time has passed. During the immediate past summer, services were provided to these visitors on an as-

needed basis. Consideration of a partial stipend for the Coordinator over the summer should be considered. Perhaps an hourly wage could be established and implemented for these services.

The FOP continues to be a valuable resource to the university. Utilization of the services of the program has risen moderately but consistently over the past several years. The majority of the faculty visitors are full-time faculty. Efforts made to move the non-tenure track faculty towards some form of collective voice and representation may be leading to an increased awareness of the services provided through an Ombuds office and may be contributing to the increase of non-tenure track faculty contacts. To explore and document this possible trend, data on tenure/tenure track vs non-tenure track full-time faculty contacts was added to the data recorded regarding visitor status. Next year's annual report will include this data.

As coordinator I would like to express my appreciation for the cooperation and support of faculty and administrative leaders in the university who have participated in discussions of issues brought to their attention. I am especially appreciative of the administration's willingness to support the work of the FOP without violating the independence, neutrality, informality or confidentiality of the ombuds process.

### **Goals for the 2015 – 2016 academic year**

The goals specified in the 2014-2015 Annual Report were met. Ongoing goals for the FOP include:

- Continue to provide high quality services to members of the NAU faculty. Messages left with the Office will be returned within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays.
- Outreach activities to inform faculty about the services of the FOP will continue to be conducted. Regular activities include a presentation to the Faculty Senate, distribution of this report as is appropriate, brown bag presentations on issues of importance to faculty at least once each semester, and continued coordination with other campus resources to ensure effective referral to the FOP when an appropriate service can be provided.
- Increased workshop presentations, in part through collaboration with the Office of Faculty Development and the New Beginnings program, will be conducted during the coming year. The goal is to have at least two workshop presentations during each semester of the coming year.
- Continued involvement with both the statewide Ombuds group and the International Ombuds Association (AOI) will provide for networking, consultation, and support from Ombudsmen at other institutions. This is especially important to the operation of the NAU Faculty Ombuds Program since there is no direct colleague or associate in the present organizational structure of the FOP.
- Periodic meetings with the leaders of other campus resources to monitor emerging issues within the university community will continue to be held. This provides for a proactive approach to addressing issues which may be brought to the attention of the Ombuds office.

New goals for the 2016-2017 academic year include:

- Working with the newly hired Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Carmen Phelps, to strategize methods for meeting the needs of diversity segments of the university faculty.
- Track tenure vs. non-tenure status of faculty and include this information in the next annual report.

**Vision statement**

The present coordinator of the FOP will retire from university service at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year. This is a prime opportunity to review the function and structure of the FOP and to decide on the future direction of the program. A transition plan for identifying and training a new coordinator should be undertaken early in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Among the options that should be considered are the expansion of the FOP to a wider service that would provide services to classified staff within the university and possibly students or other constituencies that might be identified. If a full-time ombudsman position was to be created, the coordinator could begin a process of recruiting and training a cadre of interested faculty and staff who might serve as mediators. This would allow for the identification and training of members from under-represented groups across campus to serve as mediators, perhaps increasing the comfort of under-represented groups in seeking services through the Ombuds Office.