



**Faculty Ombuds Program
Annual Report 2018-2019**

**Prepared by
Bruce E. Fox, Ph.D., Program Coordinator**

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Summary

- During the 2018-2019 academic year forty-seven (47) total contacts were made with the Faculty Ombuds Program (FOP) representing thirty-nine (39) unique individuals. The total number of visitors to the FOP decreased from 2017-2018 (61) but the number of unique visitors increased (from 27 to 39). Of the 47 total visits, 42 were faculty.
- The 2018-2019 total faculty contacts was just over the long-term average (since fall 2013) of 41.
- The largest category of visitors were faculty (89%), comparable to the 2017-2018 percentage of 90%. However, the distribution of faculty changed from 2017-2018 (58% tenure/tenure track and 42% non-tenure track) to 2018-2019's 45% and 55%, respectively.
- Evaluative Relationships were the most common presenting concern brought to the Program. This contrasts with all other previous years where Peer and Colleague Relationships were the largest concern.
- Individual consultation was the primary intervention. In most cases, problem-solving strategies or clarification of university policies were the main forms of service offered (56%). These numbers are similar to those in previous Annual Reports. Referrals to other campus resources was recommended in 36% of the cases. In one case, a facilitated discussion was undertaken involving the original visitor and another party or parties with whom they were in conflict.
- Meetings were held with key persons in the university community to maintain personal contacts and to review services being offered through the Program.

History of the Faculty Ombudsman Program at Northern Arizona University

Academic year 2018-2019 marks the continuation of services provided to faculty through the services of an Ombudsman. Northern Arizona University has offered these services to various constituencies 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 Ombuds program was reduced which resulted in staff reductions and limits on the scope of services. Ombuds services were not offered at all from 2004-2006. The Faculty Ombuds 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. Dr. Eugene Moan, assumed the coordinator position in the summer of 2013 and served through the 2017-2018 academic year. Beginning with the start of the Fall 2018 semester Dr. Bruce Fox took over the role of Coordinator of the FOP.

Present Status of the Faculty Ombuds Program

The coordinator's position continues as 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. With Dr. Moan's retirement, Dr. Bruce Fox became coordinator of the program. Dr. Fox is a tenured full professor in the School of Forestry in the College of Forestry, Environment, and Natural Sciences and has been employed in various teaching, administrative, and service roles at NAU since 1985. Dr. Fox has served in multiple administrative and service positions during his time at NAU. Previously held include chair of the School of Forestry, Director of the Honors Program, and Director of the Master of Administration Program. He has been a member of the Faculty Senate and served as president of the group from 2015-2017. He is a current member of the Commission on the Status of Women. He has previous training in mediation and completed Ombudsman training through the International Ombudsman Association in the summer of 2018.

Services of the Faculty Ombuds Program continue to be offered under the Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). These services follow the IOA tenets of:

- **Neutrality.** Not advocating for a person or outcome but rather advocating for a fair process in all situations
- **Informality.** Concerns addressed outside of other processes of record (such as the Equity and Access office, etc.)
- **Confidentiality.** Unless waived by the party seeking services or if an eminent threat exists that would disrupt the safety of the university community, confidentiality is maintained.
- **Independence.** 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 Annual Report is the only documentation of services provided through the FOP during a given academic year.

Faculty Ombuds Office Activities 2018-2019

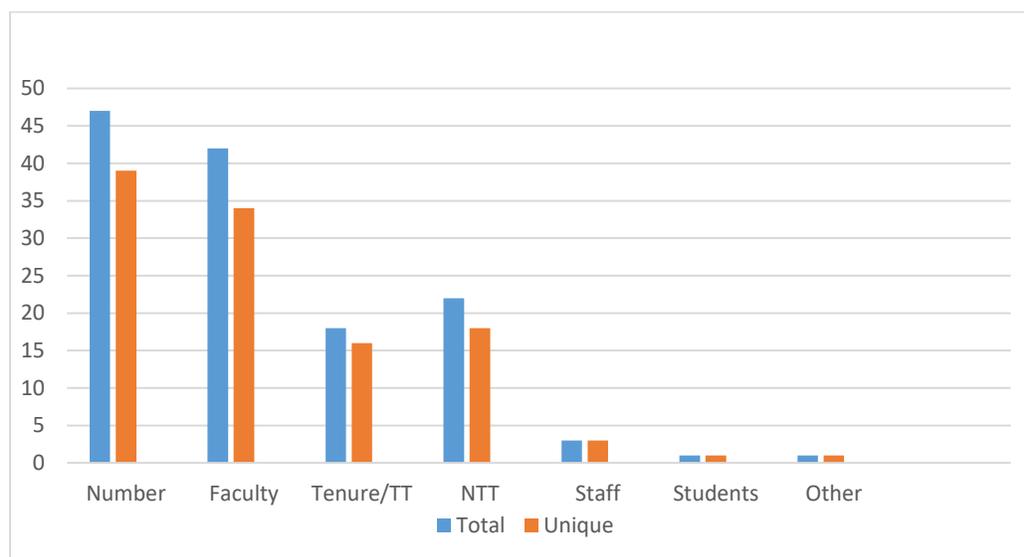
Since the effective operation of an Ombudsman program involves collaboration and referral to other resources on campus, effort is placed on establishing and maintaining direct personal contact with key persons on the Northern Arizona University campus. During the 2018-2019 academic year, I met in-person meetings with the following offices and individuals:

Contacts with key parties 2018-2019
Meeting with Dr. Eugene Moen to discuss Program transition and history
Meeting with Vice Provost Roger Bounds to outline duties and expectations
Meeting with Interim Provost Brian Levin-Stankevich to outline expectations
Meeting with Employee Assistance and Wellness Director Heather Nash, PhD. and staff
Meeting with Human Resources Director Joshua Mackey
Meeting with Amy Rushall, Program Director, Faculty Professional Development Office
Meeting with Michael Sabath, Associate Vice President & Campus Exec Officer NAYuma

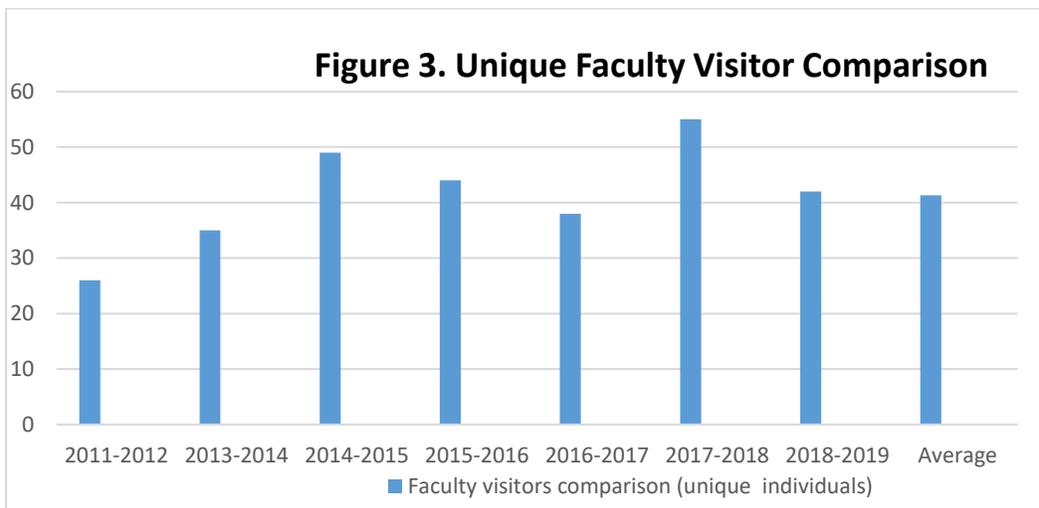
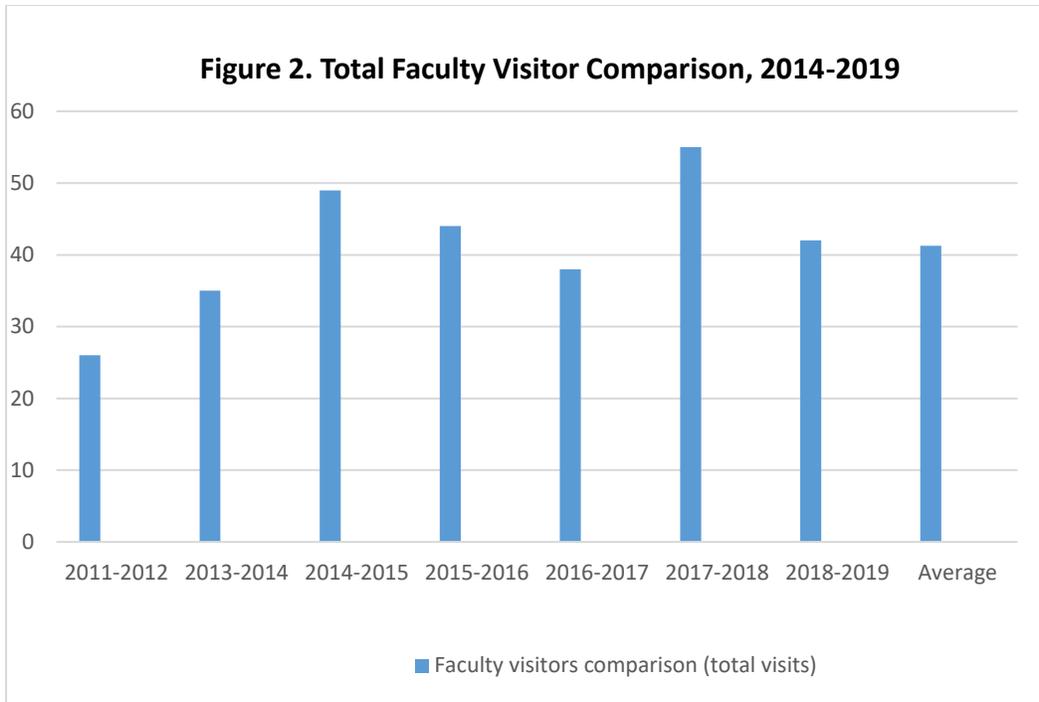
During the Fall 2018 semester I kept regular office hours at the Programs' office in Peterson Hall but during the Spring 2019 semester regular office hours were not held there due to knee surgery that limited my mobility. Instead, inquiries were directed thru the Ombuds telephone number that I monitored on a regular basis with the goal of returning all inquiries within one business day. During both semesters individual appointments were made. During the spring

most such appointments were held in my office in forestry. Although not ideal, the arrangement seemed to work. Over the course of the 2018-2019 academic year, forty-seven (47) total contacts were made with the FOP representing thirty-nine (39) unique individuals (Figure 1). Faculty members constituted the largest category of persons who contacted the FOP for assistance (42), followed by academic professionals/staff members (3), students (1), and one (1) from outside of the university. Of the unique faculty members served, sixteen (16) were tenured/tenure track and eighteen (18) were non-tenure track.

Figure 1. Total Faculty Ombuds Visitors, 2018-2019



Total visitation and total faculty visitation fell between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. Total visitation dropped from 61 to 47 and faculty visitation from 55 to 42 (Figure 2). However, faculty visitation was just over the long-term average (41) of all other previous years. The number of unique faculty visitors followed similar trends (Figure 3). While the number of visitors declined from 2017-2018, that year had the highest total visits over the comparison period.



In 2018-2019 approximately 45% of the total visits were from tenured/tenure track faculty, with the remaining 55% from non-tenured faculty. This is a reverse of the percentages from 2017-2018 when approximately 58% of the visits were from tenured/tenure track faculty, with the remaining 42% from non-tenured faculty

Although 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 made. Nonfaculty visits total five during 2018-2019: three from classified staff members, one from a student, and one from an individual outside of the university.

Comparison to Other Institutions

Information regarding the scope of ombuds services and utilization patterns at other academic institutions is 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 variables. 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.

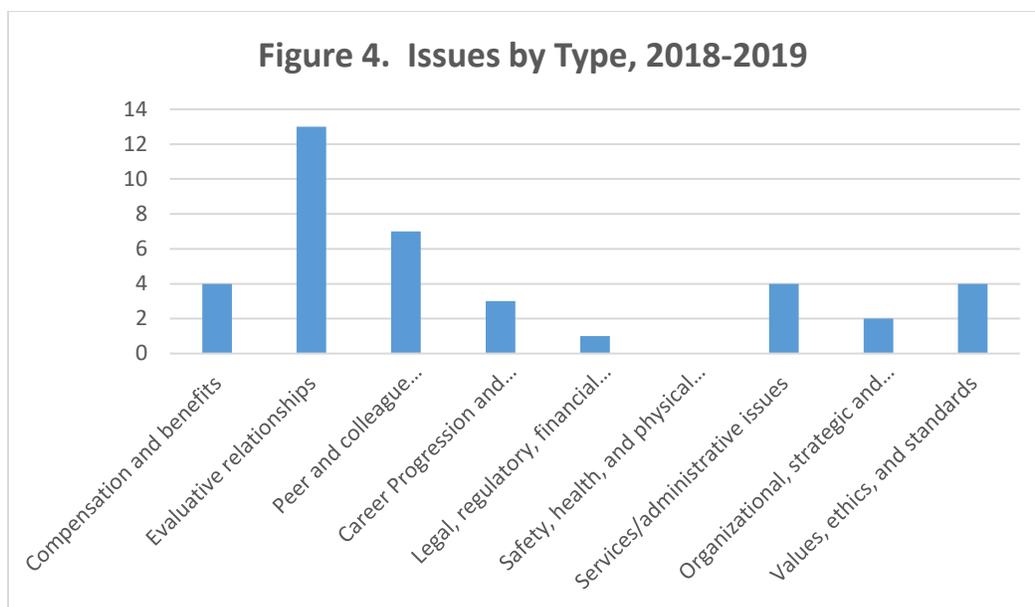
Despite these limitations, the Ombudsman's Office of the University of South Carolina has conducted an informal survey of ombuds programs at Carnegie Foundation Tier I institutions for the past ten years. Their report states that in the sample of thirty-six schools the number of faculty visitors per year to the ombuds offices averages forty-nine. (University Ombudsman Annual Report-University of South Carolina. Retrieved August 9, 2019 at: [University of South Carolina Ombuds Annual report 2016-2017](#)). NAU data for the 2014-2019 period reveals an average of forty-one (41) visitors per year, a number lower than Ombuds office visitation compared to other institutions. Recommendations for increasing faculty awareness of the FOP are included in the goals for the coming year shown at the end of this report.

Issues of Diversity

Nearly all initial contacts with the FOP are made by telephone and a portion of these visitors were only provided services (including follow-up) through telephonic communications. No demographic information or any other form of written record is made of their contact with the FOP. Therefore, no data exists. This is in keeping with the confidential provisions of the Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). Individuals are only asked about their status as a faculty member to ensure that those receiving services fall within the charge of the program.

Presenting Issues

The presenting issues of faculty and administrators who made contact with the FOP were identified and recorded using the standardized classification system of the International Ombudsman Association (Appendix 1). A comparison of presenting concerns is seen in Figure 4. The numbers in this chart exceed the total number of visitors because many visitors mention multiple concerns during the contact with the office.

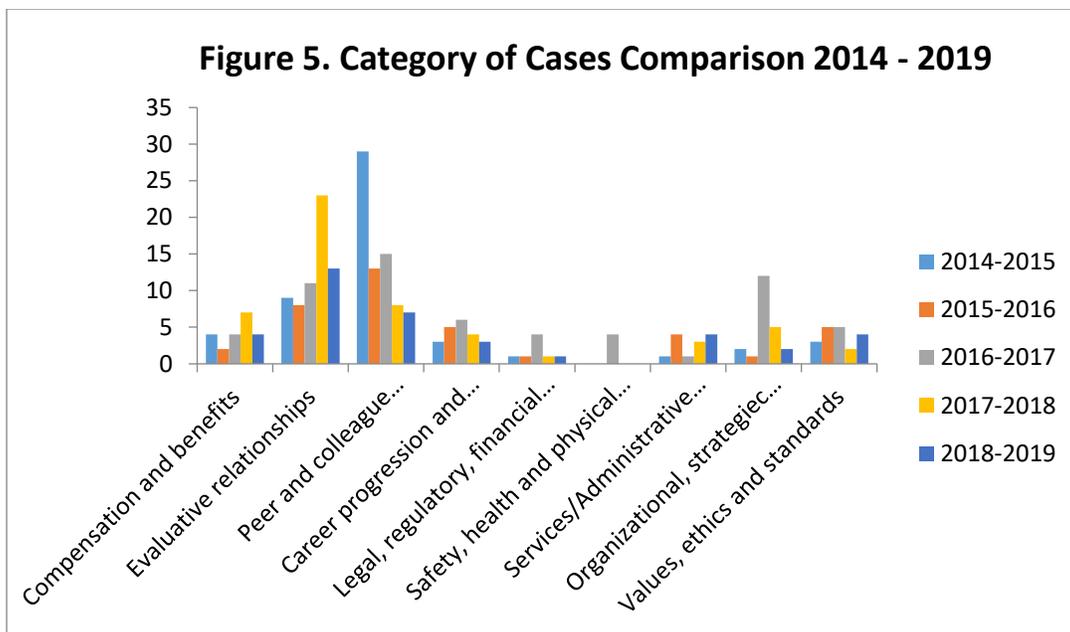


The largest category of concern continues to involve “Evaluative processes and relationships,” followed by “Peer and colleague interactions”. In the first category, the majority of the concerns involved the visitor’s perception of them receiving unfair treatment in terms of course assignments, compensation, and promotion and tenure evaluations. Resolution of these cases generally involved clarifying personnel policies and procedures.

With respect to “Peer and Colleague Interactions” the majority of the concerns involved visitor perception that they were being treated in an uncivil manner by another member of the university community (faculty, staff, or administrators). Here, the concerns were usually addressed by either a problem-solving session involving the visitor who could then decide on a course of action or with a facilitated conversation with the affected parties.

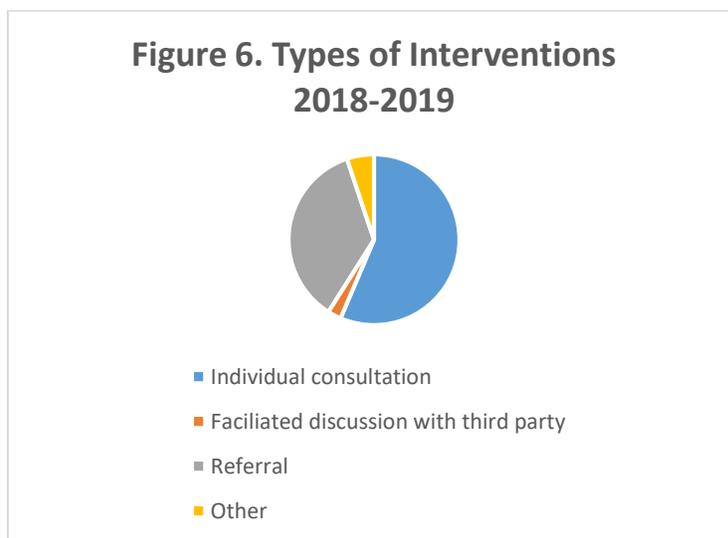
For the Fall 2018 and about one-third of the Spring 2019 semester, these sessions were always conducted in the privacy of the Ombuds office. For part of the Spring 2019 semester, the sessions were held in my office in forestry. All visitors participated voluntarily. In the 2018-2019 academic year individual consultation was the primary intervention.

Although with some variation across the years, since the 2014-2015 academic year, “Evaluative Relationships” and “Peer and Colleague Relationships” have consistently been the areas where most of the visitors concerns focused (Figure 5).

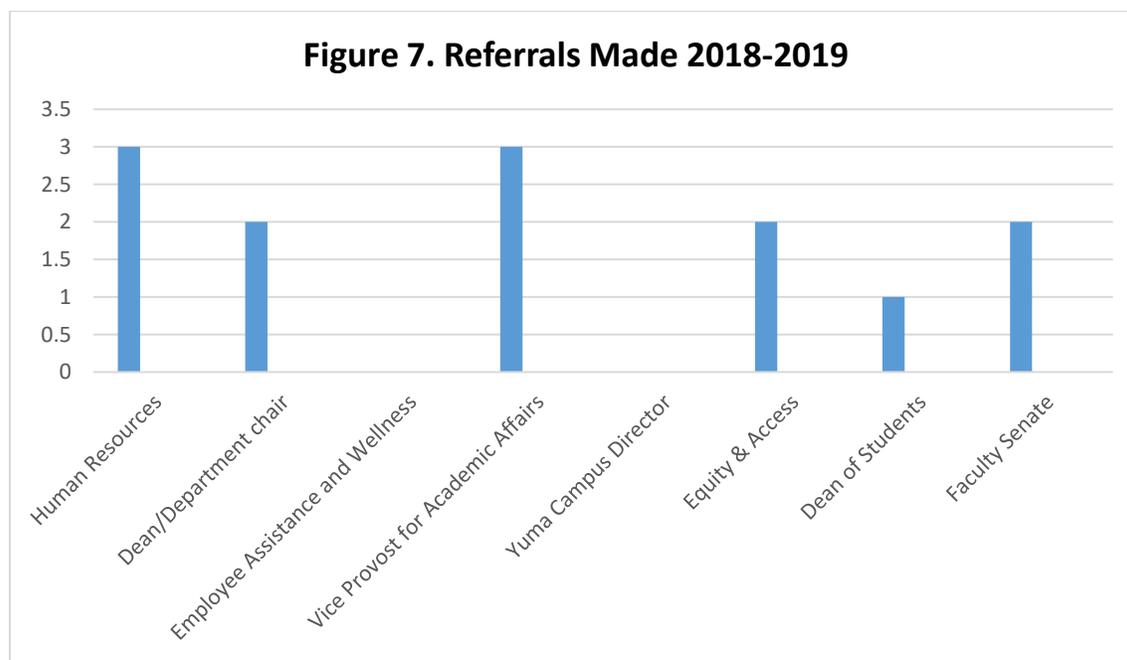


Interventions

The FOP provides a variety of strategies and assistance for visitors. During 2018-2019 “Individual Consultations” and “Referrals” were the most frequently used strategies (Figure 6). Oftentimes visitors needed an opportunity to “think out loud” with a neutral party and then then some direction and assistance in find resources that would help them address the issues at hand.



Referral to other campus resources was recommended in twelve (12) cases (Figure 7). The most common referrals were to Human Resources and the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel.



Other Activities of the FOP Coordinator

In cooperation with the Faculty Professional Development Program and the Productive Beginnings program, efforts continued on presenting workshops on topics relevant to new faculty. During the 2017-2018 academic year a video-taped presentation on the activities of the FOP was made for the Faculty Senate followed by an in-person question and answer session. This is done annually to help keep faculty informed about the services offered through the program. A similar presentation will occur in Fall 2019. The later date was chosen to allow for the presentation of an entire 2018-2019 data.

Trends and Implications

As has been the case for the past five years, the majority of visitor concerns are in regard to issues that involve interactions with others in the work setting, including evaluative relationships. 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 difficult conversations between parties

who are in conflict with one another. The continued willingness of persons to work toward finding a fair and just resolution to the issues before them is commendable.

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 have less than complete and accurate knowledge be less knowledgeable about career advancement paths. The criteria for advancement and process for applying for reclassification and promotion do not seem as clear for them as they are for the tenure track faculty. Given the large number of non-tenure track faculty at NAU, basic fairness necessitates greater clarity in the standards and process for evaluation and promotion as well as more effective dissemination of this information to ALL faculty and academic administrators.

Non-faculty members of the university community continue to contact the Program. In these cases, referral to other appropriate offices is made. Follow-up appointments are not provided. These contacts point to the need for a centralized point of contact to help all members of the university community find the appropriate resources to address their concerns.

As with previous years, contacts with the Program occurred outside of the academic year. In 2018-2019 approximately 30% of the visits happened outside the academic 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.

Goals for the 2018 – 2019 Academic Year

Goals for the FOP included:

- Successful transition of Dr. Bruce Fox into the role of coordinator of the FOP. This work began immediately after the announcement of his appointment during the Spring, 2018 and included a campus wide announcement, a brown bag lunch open to faculty to meet Dr. Fox and discuss their views of how the FOP can be of assistance to faculty, and a brief appearance before the Faculty Senate to announce his appointment.
- Continued provision of high quality services to members of the NAU faculty. Messages left with the Office returned within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays.
- Update of the FOP website to reflect the change in coordinator and for any other necessary revisions.
- Continued outreach activities to inform faculty about the services of the FOP. Regular activities to include a presentation to the Faculty Senate, distribution of the Progress

Report as appropriate, and posting of the report on the Ombuds homepage, 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. The goal was to have at least two workshop presentations during each semester.
- Continued involvement with both the statewide Ombuds group and the International Ombuds Association (AOI) to 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.

Assessment of 2018-2019 Activities

- During the past year, messages were returned within 24 hours and appointments usually scheduled within 1-2 days.
- The web site was updated.
- Presentations to those in the New Beginnings program were conducted in line with the topics presented in previous years.
- Continued involvement with the International Ombudsman Association achieved through continued affiliation of the coordinator as an associate member and through subscription to the IOA listserv to monitor current developments in the field. In addition, I completed the “Foundations of Organizational Ombudsman Practice” course through the IOA in July 2018.
- Outreach efforts were not well met.

Goals for 2019-2020

- Continue to provide high quality services to members of the NAU faculty. Return all messages left with the Office within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays.
- Update the FOP website as necessary.
- Expand outreach activities to inform faculty about the services of the FOP. Regular activities will include a presentation to the Faculty Senate, distribution of this report as appropriate and posting of the report on the Ombuds homepage, 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. Outreach efforts were the biggest source of disappointment for me. This needs to be a higher priority of my work for this coming year.

- 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.
- Achieve better outreach to NAUYuma and other faculty not located on the Mountain Campus.
- 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.
- Improve the format and timeliness of the progress report.

Summary

It has been my honor and pleasure to serve as the coordinator of the FOP for the 2018-2019 academic year. Having the opportunity to assist faculty in finding solutions to complex problems is a challenging and rewarding task. As coordinator, I appreciate the cooperation and support of faculty and administrative leaders in the university who have participated in discussions of issues brought to their attention, especially with of the administration's willingness to support the work of the FOP without violating the independence, neutrality, informality or confidentiality of the ombuds process. The support of the Provost's office in making this service available to faculty is an important investment in providing an avenue for addressing and potentially resolving problems without going through formal and often adversarial channels.