

**Policy Number/Title:** 1.3.1.03 Ombuds Office  
**Effective Since:** 09/11/2019  
**Last Revision Approved:** 09/11/2019  
**Responsible Office:** Office of the President

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### 1. Scope:

Applies to all interactions with the Ombuds Office by any Winthrop faculty, staff or administrator and governs all operations and selection of the Ombuds.

### 2. Definitions:

This section is intentionally left blank.

### 3. Policy:

**Role of Ombuds:** The individual serving as Ombuds has no institutional authority to change any rules, overturn any decisions, or even force issues to be addressed by others. The Ombuds is neutral in his/her activities and shall advocate for fair and equitably administered processes, but does not act as an advocate for any individual. The work of the Ombuds is intended to assist individuals in reaching resolutions that are consistent with stated ideals, objectives, and policies of Winthrop University. The services of the Ombuds are neither directed nor controlled by the President and designed to be free from direct university oversight or control. The Ombuds should not take on or hold any additional administrative roles not related to their position as an Ombuds.

**Neutrality and Guiding Standards:** The Ombuds impartially considers the interests and concerns of all persons involved in a situation with the aim of facilitating communication and assisting others in reaching mutually acceptable agreements that are fair, equitable, and consistent with the mission and policies of Winthrop University. The Ombuds Office is a place where guidance can be sought regarding workplace problems or concerns at no cost and without fear of retaliation. Winthrop prohibits any retaliation resulting from participation with the Ombuds Office. The Ombuds Office shall adhere to the [Standards of Practice](#) and [Code of Ethics](#) of the International Ombuds Association (IOA).

**Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure:** All communications with the Ombuds are confidential, to the extent permitted by law. The Ombuds Office asserts a privilege with respect to these confidential communications that cannot be waived by others. One required exception to this privileged confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, with no other reasonable options to avoid disclosure. Whether this



risk exists is determined solely by the Ombuds.

**No Reports or Notice to the University.** Based on this privilege of confidentiality, the Ombuds Office does not receive nor record complaints on behalf of Winthrop University, and the Ombuds is not designated by the University as an individual authorized to be placed on notice from reports of any violations of university policy, ethics codes or any laws. THEREFORE, COMMUNICATIONS TO THE OMBUDS OFFICE REGARDING POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF UNIVERSITY POLICIES, UNETHICAL OR UNLAWFUL PRACTICES DO NOT CONSTITUTE NOTICE TO WINTHROP UNIVERSITY. This includes the practice of the Ombuds not being considered a mandated reporting party under Title IX.

**No Record Keeping:** The Ombuds Office shall not keep records for itself or for the University with personal identifying information, other than the acknowledgment form. For purposes of the Ombuds's annual report, the Ombuds may keep non-identifiable data such as the number of yearly visitors and the broad problem areas for which Ombuds services are sought. Because of confidentiality concerns, the Ombuds Office shall discourage any communication of confidential information electronically. Digital communications should be limited to arrangements in scheduling an in-person meeting.

**Annual Report:** The Ombuds will produce an annual written report with general information and statistics about usage of the Ombuds, in a manner to avoid jeopardizing the confidentiality of any individual or the Ombuds Office by including data that come from a population of a sufficient size to prevent re-identification of individuals from the report (according to the judgment of the Ombuds). An example report would contain: number of faculty/staff using the office, number of complaints assisted with, complaint trends, concerns, impacted areas from the Ombuds Office's work over the last year, and any recommendations the Ombuds offers. This report will be delivered annually to the Office of the President, Provost, Staff Assembly, and Faculty Conference.

**Appointment of the Ombuds:** The President of Winthrop University, or the President's designee, is responsible for the appointment of an Ombuds to a three-year term. The appointment process shall be determined by the related "Ombuds Office: Terms of Reference" procedures. The President has the authority to determine if removal of an Ombuds is necessary prior to the end of the appointed term.

**Role of Ombuds Advisory Committee:** The makeup and role of an appointed Ombuds Advisory Committee shall be determined by the Ombuds Office Terms of Reference procedures.

#### **4. Procedures:**

See Terms of Reference and Charter Below under guides.



**5. Resources:**

[Ombuds Office: Terms of Reference and Charter](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF OMBUDS OFFICE ROLE AND GUIDELINES](#)

**6. History of Revisions:**

09/11/2019      Policy first established