TO: Dr. Tony Frank, Interim President
FROM: Dr. Carmen Menoni, Chair
       Dr. Paola Malpezzi-Price, Co-Chair
SUBJECT: Recommendation for Establishing of an Ombuds Program
DATE: April 28, 2009

The Commission of Women and Gender Equity recommends the University evaluate the creation of an Ombuds program as a resource for faculty, staff and administrators to utilize when confronted with uncertainties, concerns or conflicts. The ombudspersons would serve as confidential and neutral resources to CSU employees in cases of interpersonal misunderstandings or disputes, or with concerns about academic or administrative issues. The creation of such a structure could be implemented by recruiting a team of CSU professionals with good interpersonal skills and knowledge of the system, who would be willing to participate as part of their service commitment to the University.

A similar program was established at the University of Colorado in 1997. In this program, the ombudspersons are drawn from retired faculty members. The program provides informal conflict management to students, faculty, staff, and administrators on the Boulder Campus. (http://www.colorado.edu/Ombuds/index.html)

CWGE has sought endorsement of this recommendation from Faculty Council, the CSU Benefits Committee and Administrative Professional Council. Their answer is pending.

Cc. Dana Hiatt
       CWGE members
Attachment: Ombuds Office at University of Colorado
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Confidential

Visitors' identities and the contents of their conversations will remain private. Only with permission would ombudspersons contact other University members to help resolve a dispute. The only exceptions to confidentiality are disclosures of imminent harm to self, others, or property.

Impartial

Ombudspersons avoid situations in which there may be conflicts of interest. Thus, they maintain no personal stake in the outcome of any dispute. The Ombuds Office promotes fair process but does not advocate for individuals.

Informal

The use of the Ombuds Office is voluntary. The focus is on alternative methods to resolving problems other than by formal institutional procedures. Ombuds Office staff do not testify in formal hearings. The office has no decision-making authority and maintains no official records.

Independent

Ombudspersons exercise autonomy regarding their responsibilities. The Ombuds Office reports to the Provost for administrative and budgetary purposes only.
**Ombuds Office**

Willard Administrative Center, Rm. 302
112 UCB
(303) 492-5077
Fax: (303) 492-2110

**Tom Sebok**, Director/Ombuds
**Donna J. Louden**, Ombuds
**Melinda Canino**, Administrative Assistant

**FACULTY OMBUDS PROGRAM**

Administrative and Research Center
East Campus
ARCE, Rm. 25
576 UCB
(303) 492-1574

**Lee Potts**, Faculty Ombudsperson
**Larry Singell**, Faculty Ombudsperson

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**What does the Ombuds Office provide?**

- Consultation and coaching for those affected by a dispute or conflict
- Mediation or help with negotiations
- Facilitation of department or group conflict resolution
- Information regarding campus resources, policies, and procedures
- Educational workshops on conflict-related topics
- Consultation with university officials to promote fair process in policy-making

**What are some typical issues?**

- Interpersonal difficulties with colleagues
- Students appealing administrative or academic policy decisions
- University members concerned about policy violations
- Professors concerned about balancing accommodation and fairness
- Students disputing grading processes
- Supervisors concerned with staff workplace performance
- Departmental conflict arising from change
- Student groups in conflict
- Professional evaluation and advancement concerns

**Can I get legal advice from the Ombuds Office?**

No. The Ombuds Office advises people of their options but does not provide legal advice.

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**How May We Assist You?**

**Are there disputes the Ombuds Office does not handle?**

The office does not address disputes between university members and persons or organizations not affiliated with the University of Colorado. The Ombuds Office also does not handle formal grievances or legal issues. The office is not the place to give legal notice to the university about the existence of a problem. However, visitors may consult with ombudspeople before or after proceeding with any formal institutional procedures.

**Faculty Ombuds Program**

The Ombuds Office has recruited and trained retired long term faculty members to serve as ombudspeople specifically available to active and retired faculty. The Faculty Ombuds Program provides the same dispute and conflict resolution services as does the Ombuds Office. Faculty ombudspeople use their unique experience to help faculty colleagues resolve conflicts, improve collegiality, enhance fair processes in the classroom, and negotiate benefits' issues. They are also available to assist entire academic units to solve problems and reach difficult decisions.

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The Ombuds Office and Faculty Ombuds program are ethically guided by the Standards of Practice of the University and College Ombuds Association.