Ombuds Office Services

The Ombuds Office offers a variety of conflict resolution services to UMass Amherst students, faculty, and staff. Our services are free of charge and always voluntary. We are confidential, neutral, informal, and independent.

Policy/Procedure Clarification
Our campus is governed by numerous laws, policies, and procedures. We don’t give legal advice, but we can help you understand the policies that might apply to your situation. As an informal resource, we don’t participate in formal processes, but we can help you understand the formal channels available for grievances or appeals.

Anonymous Inquiry
If there is information that you need to know, but you have concerns about being identified through asking, we may be able to help by making an anonymous inquiry on your behalf.

Conflict Coaching
The Ombuds can help individuals or groups to apply conflict resolution skills to specific situations. The content of the coaching is driven by the circumstances; the Ombuds and the person needing assistance will collaboratively create and practice an action plan to resolve the problem.

Facilitated Conversations
At times, individuals or groups can benefit from outside assistance in resolving a dynamic or issue. An Ombuds can work with you to design and facilitate a conversation to help improve communication and resolve issues. In keeping with our professional standards, participation in a conversation facilitated by an Ombuds must be voluntary for all parties.

Anonymous Inquiry
If there is information that you need to know, but you have concerns about being identified through asking, we may be able to help by making an anonymous inquiry on your behalf.

Restorative Practices
Conflict is best resolved by the people most closely involved. Restorative practices focus on repairing the harm done and the relationships affected by conflict. These practices can take the form of restorative conversations, with or without supporters present, or, more formally, restorative justice circles. A trained Ombuds serves as a facilitator of these practices.

Mediation
Our office can offer informal mediation between two (or more) parties in a conflict. Mediation is a structured process to help people in a dispute understand each other’s perspective, develop options, and come to an agreement about how to move forward. Mediation is only possible when both parties are willing, and it is not appropriate for all conflicts. Before considering mediation, we meet with each party individually to assess if it might be a useful approach. If so, we will schedule one or more mediation sessions where participants will be guided through a process designed to identify interests and solutions in a respectful and constructive manner.

Referrals
We are familiar with a range of campus and community support and advocacy resources that might be helpful to you. We can provide you with information about these resources or facilitate direct referrals.

Shuttle Diplomacy
Sometimes a dispute can be resolved between parties without a face-to-face meeting. The Ombuds can serve as a go-between, working to help parties develop a better understanding or a mutually acceptable agreement.

To schedule a confidential appointment, call 413-545-0867 or email ombuds@umass.edu

823 Campus Center www.umass.edu/ombuds