

Multiple Ombuds Proposal
11 May 2020

The Spring 2020 Semester has seen a significant number of academic disruptions across a number of different areas. The change to pass/fail grading (some optional, some mandatory) in many programs, the lack of a pass/fail grading option in other programs, the migration to alternate delivery methods, and changes to syllabi well into the semester are all disruptions in the lives of our students. It seems likely that the Ombud's office will see more than the usual number of cases following the Spring 2020 semester. We also don't yet know what lies in store for the Summer 2020 or Fall 2020 semesters, and what new challenges our faculty and students will face in those semesters. Putting in place additional Ombuds now will allow those people to be prepared in their roles before appeals start to come in. Making this change now would also allow for the specialization of the Ombud roles. Graduate students have expressed an interest in having an Ombud who focuses explicitly on their concerns. Creating additional Ombud positions would allow one of the Ombuds to be focused explicitly on graduate and professional student cases. Nothing in the Senate Rules explicitly prohibits the institution of more than one Ombud, although the Rules do seem to assume that there would be only one Ombud. Having several people serve in the role of Ombud simultaneously may create some additional questions, although there is some precedent for this. In the past several years, when cases have arisen with which the Ombud has a conflict of interest, or if the workload becomes too great for one person, some "back up" Ombuds have been called in. This has traditionally been done by relying on the people who have served in the role recently and are still on campus. Formally appointing two additional Ombuds now, using the usual process, would allow the selection committee to have input into the selection of the Ombud, and would make the process more efficient, by putting the Ombuds in place *before* the immediate need arises. If we decide to move forward with this plan, we will need to appoint a selection committee, and solicit nominations and applications. The two additional Ombuds could take office on July 1, 2020. Alternatively, we could appoint one additional Ombud, and put a temporary additional administrative assistant in place to help with the workload.