

Confidentiality, Records, and "Notice"

The Student Ombudsman's Office is a confidential one. It keeps no official University records of names or concerns, although it may collect demographic and feedback data for statistical purposes only. The Ombudsman may take brief notes as a memory aid, but these personal notes and any other paperwork or communications are disposed of by shredding at the earliest opportunity. E-mail is by its very nature not a confidential method of communication, but its use can provide clients of the Ombudsman's Office with much quicker and more effective service. Therefore, students who visit this Office should consider whether they are comfortable with the Ombudsman using e-mail when working on their concerns, and if they are not, inform her immediately. Otherwise, permission to conduct business on their behalf via e-mail will be assumed. Speaking to the Ombudsman does not constitute "notice" to the University that a problem exists. To do that, a student would need to speak to the appropriate administrator or begin a formal petition or appeals process.

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Office of the Student Ombudsman



What does the Ombudsman do?

The Student Ombudsman is ...

- ❖ an objective professional with a concern for fairness, equity and accuracy
- ❖ a neutral party who will listen to all sides of a story
- ❖ a comprehensive campus information resource
- ❖ a proponent for change if it is clear that existing procedures are problematic
- ❖ an advisor on how to navigate the University system most effectively
- ❖ a collaborator with an awareness of the concerns of the individual as well as the concerns of the institution
- ❖ a mentor to help students analyze and resolve their problems
- ❖ an authority on rules, policies, practices and procedures
- ❖ an informal investigator of issues and concerns

The Student Ombudsman does not ...

- ❖ supercede the authority of other University officials or faculty
- ❖ change rules, policies, practices or procedures
- ❖ engage in any activity that might be perceived by others as advocacy for any individual
- ❖ participate in any formal hearing or grievance process
- ❖ conduct formal investigations
- ❖ provide legal advice or represent the student in a legal matter

When should I go to the Student Ombudsman?

When you ...

- ❖ don't know where to start
- ❖ feel you are getting the "runaround"
- ❖ need advice on UNF grievance procedures such as grade appeals
- ❖ have not been able to resolve your issue no matter what you try
- ❖ are confused about University policy or feel that a rule, practice, policy or procedure is unfair

How can the Student Ombudsman help me?

If you have a University related problem, the Ombudsman can assist you in obtaining the information needed to help you solve it. The Student Ombudsman will listen, advise, define options and make recommendations. In addition, this resource person can make referrals to individuals more expert in a specific area.

What should I bring to the Ombudsman's Office?

It is best to have available for the Ombudsman's review all documentation regarding your problem. For example, copies of letters or e-mails you've sent or received, forms submitted, doctor's notes, etc. If you are unsure what else to bring, just call and ask!

Do I have to make an appointment?

Make an appointment if you want to be sure that the Ombudsman can assist you at a particular day and time. The office may not be able to accommodate walk-in customers. Sometimes your questions or concerns can be handled over the phone or by e-mail, with no need to visit the office in person. The Ombudsman will let you know if there is any reason that will not work.

Why we are here

The Office of the Student Ombudsman provides all UNF students with a safe, confidential place to bring questions and concerns about University rules, policies, or procedures. The Ombudsman assists students by considering all sides of an issue in an impartial and objective way, and then advises on how to best resolve the problems.

A Caution

The Ombudsman is here to help any student in need, but is not the same as a "student advocate." The Ombudsman can tell you what is possible to do in resolving your problem and give advice, but cannot guarantee that everything will work out to your satisfaction. Finally, the Ombudsman does not have decision-making authority and cannot tell any staff, administrator or faculty member what to do.