

Faculty Ombudsperson Annual Report 2025-2026

I am pleased to submit the second annual report of the University of Missouri (MU) Faculty Ombudsperson Office for the period of June 16, 2025 to June 12, 2026. The MU Faculty Ombudsperson serves as a designated neutral whose major function is to provide informal assistance and impartial conflict/dispute resolution to the University's faculty. The ombudsperson follows the standards of practice of the International Ombuds Association (IOA): confidentiality, impartiality, informality, and independence as described in the University of Missouri Faculty Ombudsperson Charter; the exception to the standards of practice is that the MU Faculty Ombudsperson is a mandated reporter regarding discrimination and harassment of protected classes. The ombudsperson is a safe, confidential and free resource available to all tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty, as well as to adjunct faculty. Faculty who utilize the ombudsperson office are protected from retribution and retaliation. The aim of the ombudsperson's work is to positively impact the well-being of faculty and the climate of MU by enabling faculty to thrive.

The intent of this report is to provide information about the concerns MU faculty have brought to the ombuds' office to help the organization address identified or potential issues, revise policies and practices, and improve the overall campus climate. The data and themes presented in the report reflect both the vulnerability and courage of our faculty visitors to share their challenges and their commitment to their faculty roles and to the institution. I am grateful to each visitor who trusted that they would be listened to, heard and supported in identifying possible courses of action in response to their concerns.

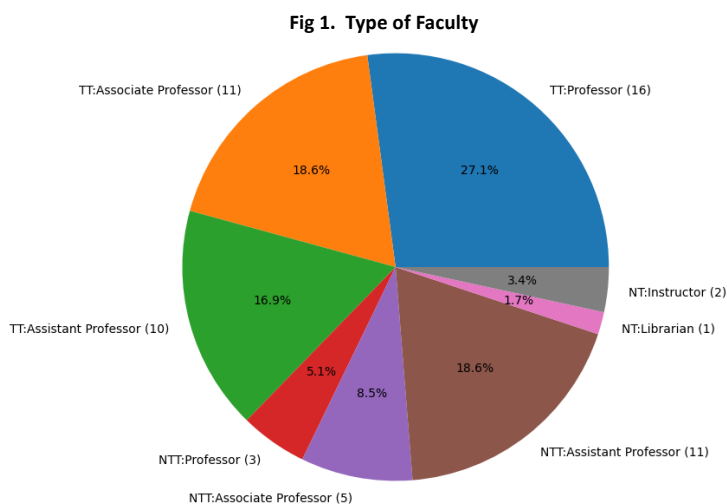
Annual Report in Context

The impartiality, informality, confidentiality and independence of the faculty ombudsperson allows the ombuds to hear concerns that faculty may not otherwise share. The issues that are shared can be complex and many-sided. Thus, the themes described in this report do not represent all perspectives regarding these complex issues. Rather, this report provides a unique perspective on the faculty experience for institutional learning and responsive action. The information presented here is reported consistent with IOA guidelines.

Visit Information

Visitors from 11 different colleges/schools were served by the faculty ombudsperson. Of the 60 faculty members who visited the ombudsperson, 63.3% were tenure-track and 36.7% were non-tenure-track (Figure 1).

Of the 88 total visits with faculty, 74% were initial visits with the faculty member(s) and 26%



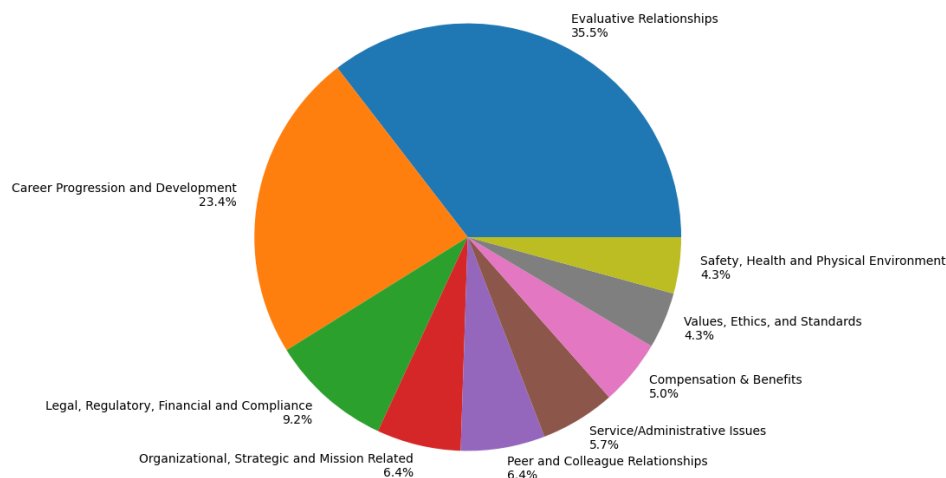
were follow up contacts—either visits or email communications. In three instances, visits were with a group of faculty.

The total interaction time between visitor and faculty ombudsperson averaged 1.8 hours per visitor concern (median=1.5 hours; range=1.0-7.5 hours). The total number of visits between faculty visitor and ombudsperson averaged 1.5 visits per concern (median=1.0 visits; range=1-6 visits).

Concerns

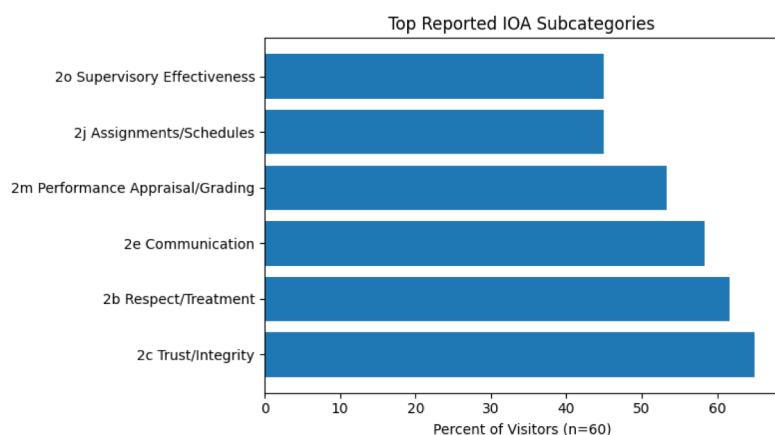
The most frequent IOA Category of concern expressed by faculty visitors was *Evaluative Relationships*, which is defined as, “Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships.” (Figure 2). The second most frequent concern category was *Career Progression and Development*, which includes promotion and tenure concerns, as well as post-tenure review. The third most frequent concern category was *Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance* that covers discrimination and accessibility concerns.

Fig 2. IOA Categories of Concerns (% of total)



The top six most frequently reported subcategories of faculty concerns fall under the category of Evaluative Relationships (Figure 3):

Fig 3. Most frequently report IOA Subcategories (% of visitors)



Appraisal/Grading (job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)

- Assignments/Schedules (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)

- Trust, Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- Respect, Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- Performance

- Supervisory Effectiveness (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)

The frequencies of all IOA categories and subcategories of concern are included in Appendix A.

Ombudsperson actions

The ombudsperson's response to the faculty visitor is dependent on the situation and the needs of the visitor. The ombudsperson actions can be categorized as described in the following table:

Category	Examples
Help visitors help themselves	discuss appropriate resources, offices, processes coaching
Informal intervention	facilitate discussions, formal mediation, shuttle diplomacy look into issue informally/generically direct to senior leaders/offices after attempts at lower levels contact office for advice (e.g., Provost or OGC) assist visitors with processes
Work within organization	early warning of new issues identification of systemic/structural issues non-voting committee member education resulting from issue identification
Break confidentiality	Office of Institutional Equity Ethics, Compliance and Audit Services imminent danger

For the visitors served during the interval of this report, the faculty ombudsperson helped the visitors help themselves for 100% of visitors and provided an informal intervention for 37% of visitors. For recurring issues, the ombudsperson took action to work within the organization by discussing these concerns with the Provost during regular one-on-one meetings. The ombudsperson broke confidentiality and reported a concern to the Office of Institutional Equity for 3% of the visitors.

Overall Themes

The strongest themes that emerged were related to:

1. Faculty evaluation concerns
2. Problems involving chairs, directors, and supervisors
3. Workplace conflict and toxic departmental climates
4. Retaliation and fear of retaliation

These concerns, which were often intertwined, are especially concentrated around faculty review processes and interactions with departmental leadership.

Both NTT and TT faculty expressed concerns related to evaluations by department chairs or directors. Specifically, faculty had issues with:

- Workload policies being outdated or ambiguous
- Annual review processes:
 - how workload policies inform the annual evaluations
 - the relationship between annual reviews and progress towards tenure
 - concerns about “satisfactory needs improvement” rating
- 5-year post-tenure review process and interaction with annual reviews and workload policies
- NTT non-renewals
 - no justification for non-renewal provided
 - sufficient notice of non-renewal

Other concerns related to departmental leadership, which often overlapped with concerns about culture and/or discrimination included:

- Department governance issues:
 - Hiring without faculty involvement
 - Failure to follow departmental procedures
 - Committee recommendations being disregarded
- Inequitable treatment based on gender or other factors.
 - Allegations of long-standing sexism
 - Differences in how complaints are handled for men and women
 - Concerns about hiring practices

Difficulties with leadership included the perception that promotion and/or tenure or post-tenure review processes were being used to remove faculty from their jobs. There were also concerns about differences in application of workload and promotion and tenure standards, resulting from changes in departmental leadership, i.e., a new department chair. In some instances, faculty were concerned that department chairs were making unilateral decisions about workload, promotion and tenure standards, inconsistent with departmental procedures. Similar concerns were raised related to other departmental decisions, such as program/course development and hiring decisions. There were also concerns about discrimination based on sex or gender identity. A more general theme expressed by a significant proportion of visitors was fear of retaliation. In some instances, faculty were anxious they would be retaliated against by their chair/director/dean for raising or reporting a concern.

Notable differences from 2024-2025

Use of faculty ombuds office increased during the third year, with a 20% increase in the number of faculty visitors while the total number of visits decreased by ~25%. The reduced number of

total visits was largely because the number of visits per visitor concern declined from 2 visits to 1.5 visits. The themes that emerged were largely consistent with those observed in 2024-2025.

Outreach Activities

The ombudsperson engaged with both faculty and administrators throughout the year. The focus of the presentation was either education about the Faculty Ombudsperson office and resources offered or sharing the annual report.

- New Faculty Webinar: Faculty Resources
- New Faculty Orientation: Faculty Support Expo
- Department Chairs Fall Retreat
- Faculty Council
- Provost Leadership Program
- School of Nursing Dean's Forum

International Ombuds Association Certification

- Completed process to become a Certified Organizational Ombuds
 - The Certification Committee has unanimously approved my application for Certified Organizational Ombuds

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Pamela S. Bruzina".

Pamela S. Bruzina
Professor of Nutrition & Exercise Physiology
MU Faculty Ombudsperson

Appendix A

1 Compensation & Benefits Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.			
subtotal	10		1.6% of total
	number	% category	% visitors
1.a Compensation (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)	4	40.0	6.7
1.b Payroll (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)	0	0.0	0.0
1.c Benefits (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)	1	10.0	1.7
1.d Retirement, Pension (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)	1	10.0	1.7
1.e Other	4	40.0	6.7
2 Evaluative Relationships Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)			
subtotal	394		64.3% of total
	number	% category	% visitors
2.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs (differences about what should be considered important - or most important –often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)	22	5.7	36.7
2.b Respect, Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate behavior, disregard for people, rudeness, crudeness, etc.	37	9.5	61.7
2.c Trust, Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)	40	10.3	66.7
2.d Reputation (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)	25	6.4	41.7
2.e Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)	35	9.0	58.3
2.f Bullying, Mobbing (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)	21	5.4	35.0
2.g Diversity-Related (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)	21	5.4	35.0
2.h Retaliation (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)	22	5.7	36.7
2.i Physical Violence (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)	0	0.0	0.0
2.j Assignments, Schedules (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)	27	7.0	45.0
2.k Feedback (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)	19	4.9	31.7
2.l Consultation (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)	2	0.5	3.3
2.m Performance Appraisal/Grading (job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)	32	8.2	53.3

2.n Departmental Climate (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility)	24	40.0	6.2
2.o Supervisory Effectiveness (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)	27	45.0	7.0
2.p Insubordination (refusal to do what is asked)	2	3.3	0.5
2.q Discipline (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)	12	20.0	3.1
2.r Equity of Treatment (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)	20	33.3	5.2
2.s Other (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above categories)	6	10.0	1.5
3 Peer and Colleague Relationships Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization).			
subtotal	18		2.9% of total
	number	% category	% visitors
3.a Priorities, Values, Beliefs (differences about what should be considered important - or most important –often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)	2	3.3	11.1
3.b Respect, Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.	8	13.3	44.4
3.c Trust, Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)	8	13.3	44.4
3.d Reputation (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)	7	11.7	38.9
3.e Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)	6	10.0	33.3
3.f Bullying, Mobbing (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)	5	8.3	27.8
3.g Diversity-Related (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)	5	8.3	27.8
3.h Retaliation (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)	3	5.0	16.7
3.i Physical Violence (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)	0	0.0	0.0
3.j Other (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above categories)	3	5.0	16.7
4 Career Progression and Development Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)			
subtotal	83		12.9% of total
	number	% category	% visitors

4.a Job Application, Selection and Recruitment Processes (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)	4	6.7	8.5
4.b Job Classification and Description (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)	13	21.7	27.7
4.c Involuntary Transfer, Change of Assignment (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)	8	13.3	17.0
4.d Tenure-Position Security, Ambiguity (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories), Career Progression (Promotion, Reappointment, or Tenure)	11	18.3	23.4
4.e Career Progression (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)	15	25.0	31.9
4.f Rotation and Duration of Assignment (non-completion or overextension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)	5	8.3	10.6
4.g Resignation (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)	1	1.7	2.1
4.h Termination/Non-Renewal (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)	8	13.3	17.0
4.i Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)	0	0.0	0.0
4.j Position Elimination (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)	6	10.0	12.8
4.k Career Development/Coaching/Mentoring (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)	7	11.7	14.9
4.l Other (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above categories)	5	8.3	10.6
5 Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse			
subtotal	23		4.9% of total
	number	% category	% visitors
5.a Criminal Activity (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)	0	0.0	0.0
5.b Business and Financial Practices (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)	1	5.0	1.7
5.c Harassment (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video, psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment) (10 Race, 6 Gender, 1 OPC, 1 Other)	2	10.0	3.3
5.d Discrimination (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category.	10	50.0	16.7

5.e Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)	3	15.0	5.0
5.f Accessibility (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)	2	10.0	3.3
5.g Intellectual Property Rights (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)	0	0.0	0.0
5.h Privacy and Security of Information (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)	1	5.0	1.7
5.i Property Damage (personal property damage, liabilities)	0	0.0	0.0
5.j Other (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above categories)	1	5.0	1.7
6 Safety, Health, and Physical Environment Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues			
subtotal	11		1.7% of total
	number	% category	% visitors
6.a Safety (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for safety training and equipment)	1	9.1%	1.7%
6.b Physical Working/Living Conditions (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc.)	0	0.0	0.0%
6.c Ergonomics (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)	0	0.0	0.0%
6.d Cleanliness (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)	0	0.0	0.0%
6.e Security (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying "compromise of classified or top secret" information)	1	9.1%	1.7%
6.f Telework, Flexplace (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)	6	54.5%	10.0%
6.g Safety Equipment (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)	0	0.0%	0.0%
6.h Environmental Policies (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)	1	9.1%	1.7%
6.i Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)	0	0.0%	0.0%
6.j Other (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above categories)	2	18.2%	3.3%
7 Services/Administrative Issues Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties			
subtotal	21		3.3% of total
	number	% category	% visitors

7.a Quality of Services (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)	2	9.5	3.3
7.b Responsiveness, Timeliness (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)	6	28.6	10.0
7.c Administrative Decisions and Interpretation, Application of Rules (decisions about requests for academic or administrative services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)	5	23.8	8.3
7.d Behavior of Service Provider(s) (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)	1	4.8	1.7
7.e Other (any services or administrative issue not described by the above categories)	7	33.3	11.7
8 Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization			
subtotal	39		6.1% of total
	number	% category	% visitors
8.a Strategic and Mission-Related, Strategic and Technical Management (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)	3	7.7	5.0
8.b Leadership and Management (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)	7	17.9	11.7
8.c Use of Positional Power, Authority (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)	7	17.9	11.7
8.d Communication (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)	5	12.8	8.3
8.e Restructuring and Relocation (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g. downsizing, offshoring, outsourcing)	1	2.6	1.7
8.f Organizational Climate (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)	5	12.8	8.3
8.g Change Management (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)	4	10.3	6.7
8.h Priority Setting and/or Funding (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)	2	5.1	3.3
8.i Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)	0	0.0	0.0
8.j Interdepartment, Interorganization Work, Territory (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)	3	7.7	5.0
8.k Other (any organizational issue not described by the above categories)	2	5.1	3.3

9 Values, Ethics, and Standards Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.			
subtotal	17		2.6% of total
	number	% category	% visitors
9.a Standards of Conduct (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)	7	41.2	11.7
9.b Values and Culture (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)	5	29.4	8.3
9.c Scientific Conduct, Integrity (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)	2	11.8	3.3
9.d Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8 (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)	3	17.6	5.0
9.e Other (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above categories)	0	41.2	0.0
TOTAL	642		