

This charter defines the authority and responsibilities of the Ombuds Office at Utah Valley University (UVU).

Mission Statement

The mission of the Ombuds Office is to provide confidential, impartial, informal, and independent assistance to UVU community members, enabling them to voice concerns, develop options, and solve problems. The Ombuds Office facilitates dialogue and negotiation to resolve disputes and concerns within the university based on voluntary participation. Per UVU Policy 541, students have the right to access the University's Ombuds Office for consultation and assistance resolving matters of personal and school issues, including but not limited to concerns and conflicts regarding other students, faculty, university policies and processes, and housing disputes.

Purpose and Scope

The Ombuds performs various functions tailored to each visitor's specific situation and concerns. Typical activities include:

- Providing a respectful and confidential setting for individuals to discuss problems off the record, helping them clarify issues, identify goals, and develop and consider a range of options.
- Coaching visitors in written and verbal communications.
- Explaining relevant UVU policies and procedures.
- Providing referrals to other offices and their services and resources.
- Gathering relevant unattributable data and perspectives of others.
- Assisting in managing and resolving conflicts, including engaging in shuttle diplomacy.
- Facilitating one-on-one and group conversations.
- Undertaking other measures consistent with the Office's mission.

The Office also provides UVU leaders with information about general trends and patterns of concern without breaching confidentiality, so they may consider options for addressing these concerns.

Confidentiality

Contacting the Ombuds Office about a concern will remain confidential unless otherwise required by law or University policy (see Limitations on the Authority of the Ombuds Office below).

Principles of Practice

As outlined in the [International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics](#), four fundamental principles define the roles and responsibilities of the Ombuds Office at UVU: confidentiality, informality, impartiality, and independence.

Authority and Limitations of the Ombuds Office

The authority of the Ombuds at UVU is defined and limited to best serve the University community. The Ombuds may take various steps to address concerns but has no authority to render decisions, alter policy, offer legal advice, or provide psychological counseling.

1. **Providing Services to Visitors:** The Ombuds Office is a safe, accessible, and voluntary resource where campus community members can confidentially discuss complaints, concerns, and questions. Services are tailored to each individual.
2. **Initiating Informal Inquiries and Accessing Information:** The Ombuds may make inquiries or seek assistance to understand all sides of a dispute, with appropriate access to non-confidential information and personnel information with the visitor's consent.
3. **Addressing Perceived Systemic Trends:** The Ombuds may inquire into trends observed through their role and provide upward feedback to University officials about systemic problems, general trends, or patterns. Recommendations may be included for addressing these concerns.
4. **Ending Involvement in Matters:** The Ombuds may decline to participate in or withdraw from a visitor's case if involvement is deemed inappropriate.
5. **Access to Legal Counsel:** The Ombuds may require legal advice or representation to fulfill their functions and shall have access to legal counsel as necessary to protect confidentiality and the integrity of the Office.

Limitations on the Authority of the Ombuds Office

1. **Notice:** The Ombuds Office is not authorized to receive notice of claims against the University, subpoenas, or service of other legal documents.
2. **Formal Processes and Investigations:** The Ombuds shall not conduct formal investigations or participate in formal dispute processes, outside agency complaints, or lawsuits unless compelled by court order or applicable law. The Ombuds is a mandatory reporter of Title IX issues.
3. **Record Keeping:** The Ombuds will maintain records for statistical purposes only, excluding personally identifiable information. Notes and materials related to matters will be destroyed in the regular course of business unless legally required to be maintained.
4. **Advocacy for Parties:** The Ombuds shall not act as an advocate or representative for any individual party in a dispute or for the University administration.
5. **No Professional Counseling:** The Ombuds will not provide mental health counseling, medical or legal advice, or other advice better provided by qualified professionals.

Inquiry and Retaliation

No person shall face adverse action for consulting with the Ombuds. The University and its agents will not retaliate against individuals for consulting with the Ombuds Office. It is inappropriate to inquire about a UVU campus community member's use of the Ombuds Office or any communication that took place there. Discouraging or preventing visitors from using the Ombuds Office is contrary to the University's intent of providing a resource for early and informal conflict resolution.