

**Tell me about  
the “ombuds” -  
what the office does  
and how it can benefit  
me?**





Stony Brook University

# OMBUDS OFFICE

Donna L. Buehler  
University Ombudsman\*

## An Ombuds

**Listens with an open mind**  
**Helps resolve problems fairly**

\* An Ombudsman is gender-neutral in origin and is a Swedish term.

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**FAR  
BEYOND**

[www.stonybrook.edu/ombuds](http://www.stonybrook.edu/ombuds) - (631) 632-9200

**Learn** about the Ombuds Office's role at Stony Brook

**Understand** how the Ombuds Office differs from other offices such as HR, OEA, Unions, Employee/Labor Relations, Student Conduct and Community Standards, EAP/CAPS, Healthier U/Student Health & Wellness, Employee Health, etc.

**Determine** how you could benefit from a consultation with the ombuds

**Recognize** the value of the ombuds in helping to foster an environment of diversity, equity and inclusion



## What is an Ombuds?

A person who serves as a **designated neutral** within a specific organization and provides conflict resolution and problem-solving services to members of the organization.

## Where does an Ombuds work?

In corporations, colleges and universities, hospitals, government and non-governmental agencies, nonprofits and media, etc. (e.g. NIH, UN, WHO, NPR, etc.)



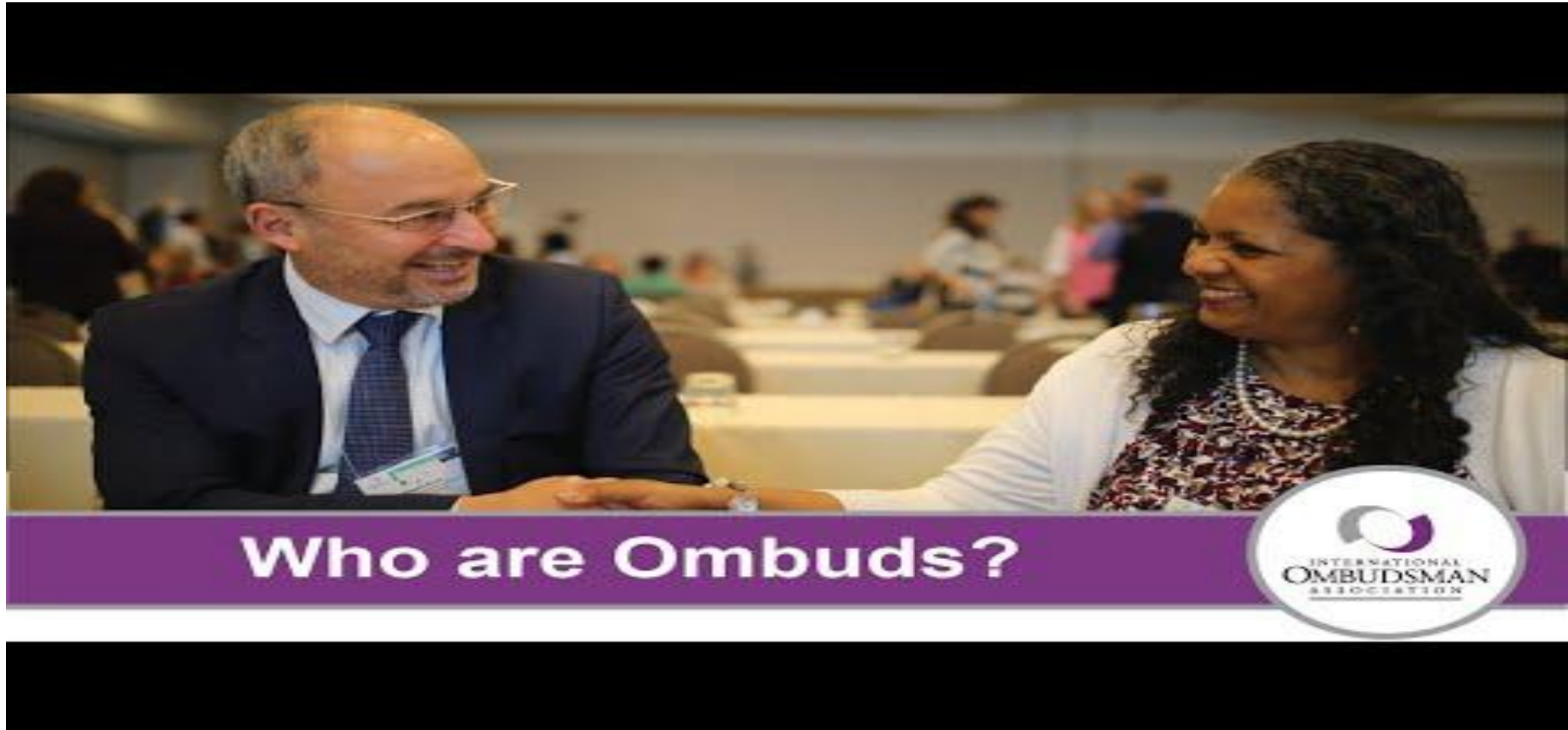
**Conflict is considered among the most significant and reducible costs to an organization (Freres, Martin 2013).**

**Cost of *unresolved* conflict:**

- REPLACEMENT
- RETENTION
- PRODUCTIVITY
- MANAGERS LOST TIME
- EMPLOYEE LOST TIME
- ENGAGEMENT
- MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING
- REPUTATION & IMAGE
- LEGAL & DISPUTE COSTS



Stony Brook University

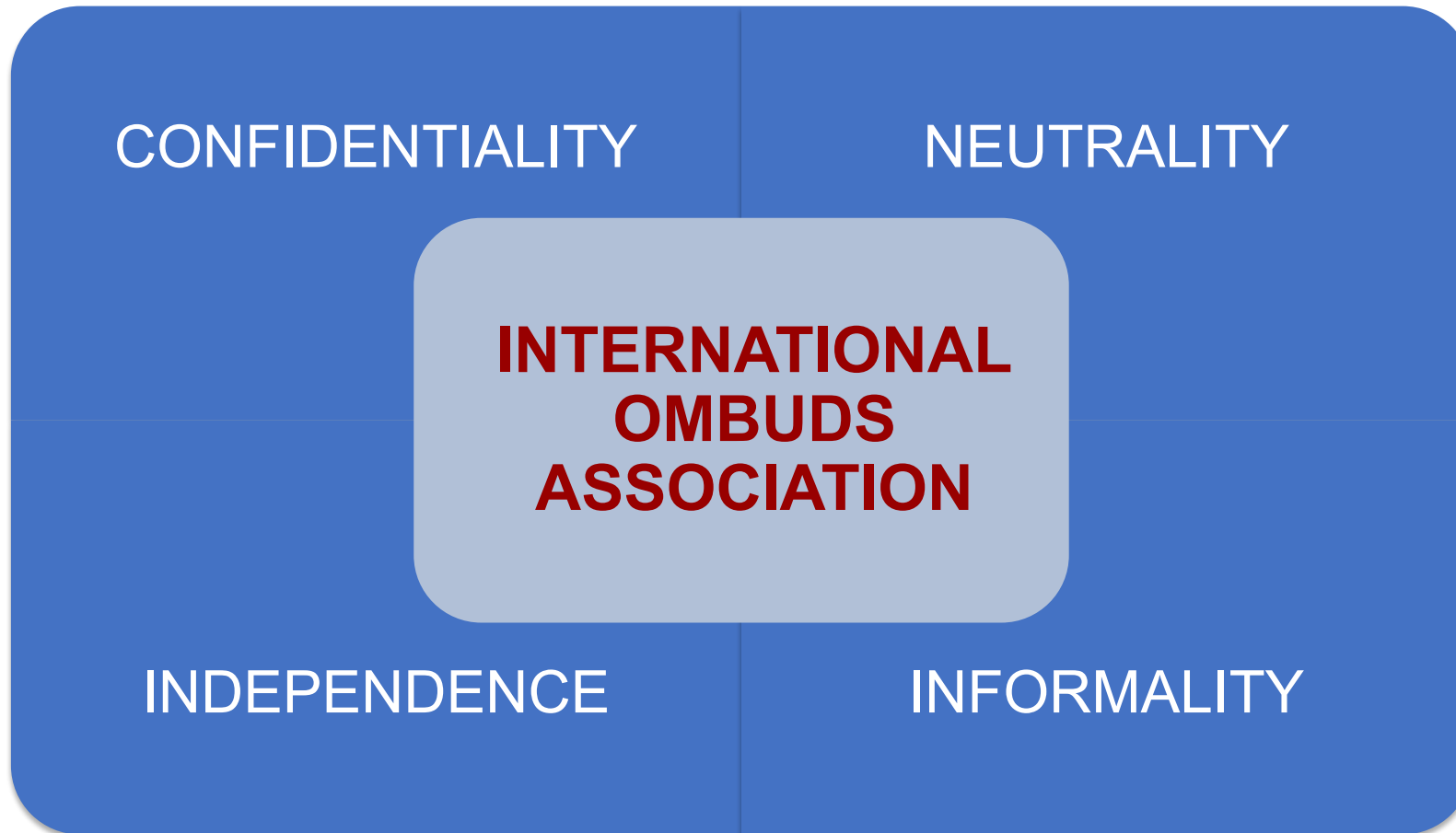


Who are Ombuds?



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<https://youtu.be/OhX9iWe8fTc>





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## Confidentiality

The Ombuds holds the identity and all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does **not** disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exceptions are when there is imminent risk of serious harm, or where required by Title IX and other state and federal laws.

## Informality

The Ombuds assists in resolving conflicts or complaints at an informal level. The Ombuds does **not** participate in any formal, internal or external investigative or adjudicative procedures or make or overturn administrative decisions. As an informal resource, the Ombuds is **not** authorized to accept notice (formal complaints) for the university, except in Title IX cases, but will refer to the appropriate office. Use of the Ombuds Office is **voluntary**.



## Independence

The Ombuds Office operates independent from other organizational entities. It reports to the President's Office for budgetary and administrative purposes. The Ombuds Office conveys perceived issues and trends and makes recommendations to improve the academic and work environment. The ombuds provides anonymous, aggregate statistical data and does **not** keep formal records.

## Neutrality

The Ombuds is **neutral, impartial, and unaligned** in the handling of concerns and complaints. In considering the rights and interests of all parties, the Ombuds assists parties in reaching mutually acceptable agreements that are fair, equitable and consistent with the mission and policies of the University. The Ombuds will **not** serve as an advocate for the university or an individual.

## WHO OMBUDS SERVES

### *Individuals & groups*

- Students
- Faculty & Staff
- Visitors
- Parents
- Alumni
- Supervisors, Directors
- Department Heads

### *Senior management*

- VPs, AVPs, Deans, Chairs

## WHAT AN OMBUDS DOES

- Conflict resolution
- Informal mediation/shuttle diplomacy
- Consultation and coaching
- Information/referral
- Prevention
  - ✓ *Outreach – tabling/fairs*
  - ✓ *Ombuds Orientation*
  - ✓ *Training*
  - ✓ *Skill development*



- Academic Issues/Integrity
- Conflicts of Interest
- Change & Transition
- Communication
- Discrimination
- Equity of Treatment
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Harassment
- Health & Safety Issues
- Incivility/Rudeness
- Interpersonal Conflicts
- Organizational climate
- Performance (evaluations, grades, promotion/tenure)
- Policy & Procedural Issues
- Supervision/Management
- Intellectual Property/Authorship Concerns

## When should I contact the “ombuds?”

- Anytime, but preferably the earlier the better
- No problem is too big or too small
- There is never a wrong reason to call

The “ombuds” can always point you in the right direction.





## Ombuds services: PREVENTION

- Outreach - [tabling/fairs](#)
- Ombuds orientations
- [Quick Tips](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Training & workshops](#) per request of departments and student groups
- Skill development - role playing
- Meet/Greet

## Ombuds services: **EARLY INTERVENTION**

- Conflict resolution
- Shuttle diplomacy
- Informal mediation
- Consultation & coaching
- Information & referral

## Ombuds services: **SYSTEMIC ISSUES**

- Identifies trends in the workplace
- Works collaboratively with other offices to resolve problems while maintaining neutrality
- Makes recommendations to administration
  - ❖ To revise policies or consider creating a policy
  - ❖ To advise on various training opportunities





## How is the “ombuds” different from:

- [Human Resource Services](#)
- [Employee/Labor Relations](#) – [Student Conduct and Community Standards](#)
- [Unions](#)
- [Office of Equity & Access](#)
- [EAP - CAPS/CPO/LGBTQ\\*Services](#)
- [Healthier U/Student Health & Wellness](#)



- **Not** an office of record – does **not** keep any identifying information about individuals or groups who consult with the Ombuds Office. No paper or electronic records or names in an online calendar or aggregate database. May keep notes with a person's permission only while working with the person and then shreds the information once the case is closed.
- **Not** an office of psychological counseling, but will refer to the EAP for faculty/staff or to CAPs for students, if appropriate.
- **Not** an office that does formal investigations. With permission, may informally investigate a complaint, help a person navigate the system or look into a situation.
- **Not** an advocate of a person, group or department or of Stony Brook as an institution. Instead, is **impartial or neutral**, helping people understand all sides of an issue to gain perspective.
- **Not** an office that gives legal advice.
- **Not** an office of compliance, except for being mandated to report Title IX issues.



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## HOW AN OMBUDS ADDS VALUE TO STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

- Offers a **safe, confidential\*** and **neutral** place to hear concerns
- **Empowers** individuals to work through challenges & **explore options**
- **Facilitates** communication and conflict resolution
- Functions as a **central** information and referral resource
- Promotes a **civil, inclusive and respectful** climate where there is **fair and equitable** treatment
- Acts **independently** in structure, function and appearance
- Provides **systemic feedback** about trends to administration and makes recommendations for resolution



## QUICK TIPS

### A handy guide to promote positive and respectful interactions with others

Actively Listening

Becoming Resilient

Developing Leadership

Enhancing Communication

Giving & Receiving Feedback

Handling Conflict

Handling Grade Dispute

Keeping an Informal Record

Making an Apology

Preparing for a Difficult Conversation

Responding to Change & Transition

Supporting Teams

Understanding Civility/Incivility

Using Email Etiquette

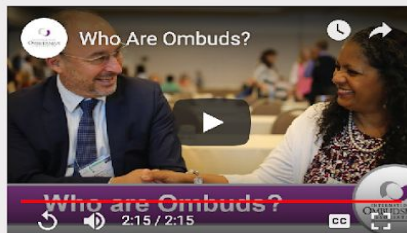
Writing a Rebuttal



Sometimes all you need  
is someone to point you  
in the right direction

### WHAT AN OMBUDS DOES

- **The Ombuds listens with an open mind.**
- **The Ombuds helps to resolve problems fairly.**
- **The Ombuds provides a safe place** to voice your concerns and explore options for productive conflict management and resolution.
- The Ombuds supports a safe, productive and civil community.



[LEARN MORE >](#)

### WHEN TO USE SERVICES

- When you need information or assistance in resolving your concern
- When you are unsure of how to proceed or what options are available
- When you feel your concerns have not been adequately addressed through formal channels
- When you don't know where else to go

[FIND OUT ABOUT SERVICES >](#)

### RESOURCES

Consult the Resources links for additional information. Resources are available for students, faculty, staff, and administrators. REGISTER below for workshops.

- [Referrals](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [Quick Tips](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Websites](#)

[VIEW ALL RESOURCES >](#)



## OFFICE LOCATIONS:

Please call for an appointment  
*in-person, phone or virtually.*

(631) 632-9200

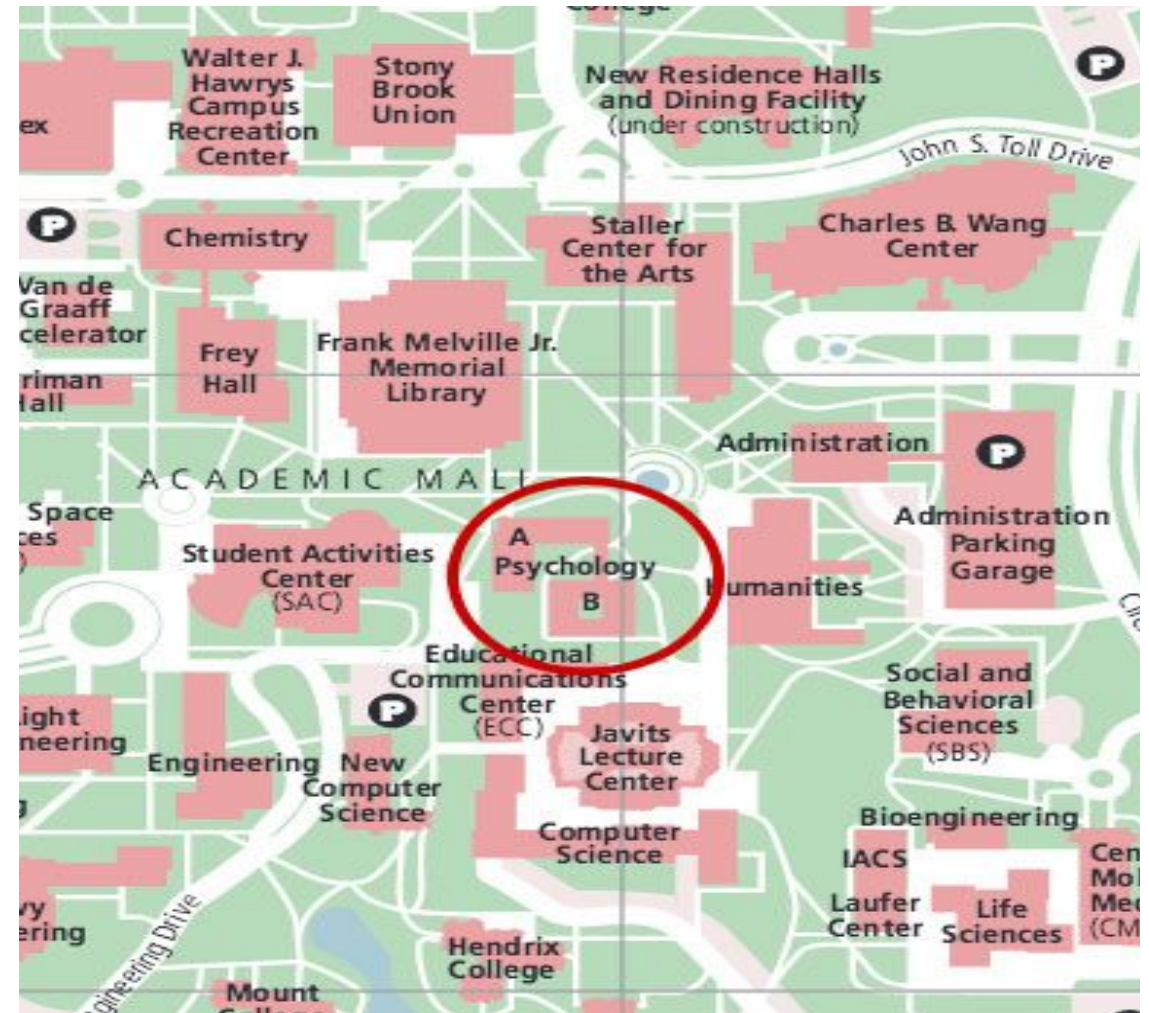
- **West Campus**

Rm. 137

Psychology B Building

- **Health Sciences Center**

By appointment





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