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Recommendations

Faculty Senate

9-19-2022

SR 21-22-34 EC

Marshall University Faculty Senate

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**Executive Committee
RECOMMENDATION**

SR 21-22-34 EC

Recommends that the university adopt the following clarifications for the position of Faculty Ombudsperson

RATIONALE:

Marshall University faculty, in shared governance, recognize that the needs of the faculty in having a faculty ombudsperson have changed over time. The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, acting as an Ad Hoc Committee to review the position of ombudsperson recommends the adoption of the findings in the attached report.

FACULTY SENATE CHAIR:

APPROVED BY THE
FACULTY SENATE:  DATE: September 1, 2022

DISAPPROVED BY THE
FACULTY SENATE: _____ DATE: _____

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT:

APPROVED:  DATE: 9-19-22

DISAPPROVED: _____ DATE: _____

COMMENTS: _____

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Position of Faculty Ombudsperson

Introduction

This committee was comprised of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, with Chair Tracy Christofero serving as a non-voting, ex-officio member.

The committee was tasked with reviewing the position of Faculty Ombudsperson and articulating the desires of the faculty with respect to the position. Our findings follow.

1. Where should the office of Faculty Ombudsperson be located?

The Faculty Ombudsperson should be housed on campus in a place that is convenient and where faculty will feel comfortable entering and exiting without feeling their presence is noted by others. One suggestion is the Drinko Library. It should also be the policy that if a faculty member is not comfortable in going to the Faculty Ombudsperson's office, arrangements can be made for them to meet off campus, virtually or by telephone and that the Faculty Ombudsman should have flexibility to take calls and make appointments in the evenings and/or weekends if needed.

2. To whom should the Faculty Ombudsperson report?

The position should report to the President for administrative oversight. The Faculty Ombudsperson will have a confidentiality agreement with all faculty using the services of this office to assure protection of both the faculty and the ombudsperson. With additional investigation, there might be a way the Faculty Senate Office could act as a buffer between the position and the administration.

If employee problems arise between the President and the Faculty Ombudsperson and/or between the President and faculty, the Faculty Ombudsperson may seek guidance from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to resolve the dispute between them.

3. What should the qualifications for the position be?

- Extensive experience as a full-time faculty member, including but not limited to the promotion and tenure process. Preference should be given to candidates who have attained the status of full professor.
- Possess a clear understanding of the civil and academic rights of faculty, university policies and procedures, state code, accreditation requirements and HEPC guidance and training opportunities for faculty.
- Possess a demonstrated commitment to and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the higher education environment.
- Excellent listening, interpersonal, written, and verbal communication skills.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain confidentiality and integrity as well as effective problem-solving skills.
- Proven ability to assess complex systemic issues and organizational political dynamics and conduct policy analysis.
- Proven experience in conflict resolution, mediation, collaborative problem solving, and/or negotiation.

- Be able to handle complex cases, such as racism, discrimination, sexual harassment, and professional misconduct at any level in an impartial, independent, firm, and objective manner.
- Proven ability to work successfully with individuals at all levels of the institution and with populations of diverse needs, interests, and backgrounds.
- Proven ability to work both independently and as part of a larger organization.
- Demonstrated experience as an Ombudsperson is preferred. Lacking that, the candidate must be willing to have training at a professional ombudsperson conference.

4. What should the job description include?

- Administers oversight of the Office of Faculty Ombudsman
- Provides confidential assistance and serves as an impartial dispute resolution consultant to the faculty in their work with other faculty, staff, students, and administrators on all Marshall University campuses.
- Ensures that the integrity of the office is maintained through upholding ombuds standards of independence, neutrality, impartiality, confidentiality, and informality, while providing timely attention to the resolution of issues and treating people with dignity and respect.
- Oversees the collection and management of caseload data. Use the data to prepare the annual report for presentation for university-wide distribution.
- Engages in relevant professional development activities.
- Designs and conducts training workshops for the university in appropriate topic areas, such as conflict resolution skills, communication, negotiation, etc.
- Consults with university staff and faculty to develop collaborative problem-solving practices.
- Provides mediation and facilitation to individuals and groups as needed.
- Facilitates group meetings, uses shuttle diplomacy and negotiation skills to facilitate communication among parties in conflict.
- Reviews the patterns of concerns brought to the Office. Recommends appropriate changes to practices, policies, or procedures that would reduce or eliminate recurring grievances.

5. What should be the process for hiring a Faculty Ombudsman?

- Formation of a search committee that includes faculty members.
- Advertising on appropriate Marshall University pages and in ombuds-specific journals (such as the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association)
- Inviting finalists to campus for interviews with faculty and appropriate administrators.

Final Comment

The committee is very clear in its recommendation that the position of Faculty Ombudsperson should be a stand-alone position. The successful candidate should not have any other duties on campus.

Submitted on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Faculty Ombudsperson Position,

Marybeth Beller

Marybeth Beller
Chair