

● *** Ombudsperson Policy * ***

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Policy 405.6.5

6.5 Ombudspersons

All Colleges, the Extension Division, and the Library will appoint ombudspersons to serve in the Promotion, Tenure, and Post-Tenure Review processes. Ombudspersons will be tenured faculty members (as defined in section 401.2.1) and elected or appointed in their respective colleges. The Provost's office will develop and implement a plan for the ombudsperson program that defines the election or appointment process, the terms of office, the training, and the implementation of the ombudsperson program¹.

An ombudsperson must be present at all meetings of a promotion committee or a tenure committee. Ombudspersons must receive adequate advance notice of a committee meeting from the chairperson².

For post-tenure quinquennial review meetings and for meetings held between either the department head or supervisor and the tenure, promotion, or review candidate to review the committee's evaluation and recommendation, the candidate or department head or supervisor may request the presence of an ombudsperson³.

The ombudsperson is responsible for ensuring that the rights of the candidate and the University are protected and that due process is followed according to the Faculty Code. Ombudspersons shall not judge or assess the candidate, and therefore may not be a member of the promotion, tenure, or review committee, or a supervisor of the candidate.

Ombudspersons who observe a violation of due process during a committee meeting should immediately intervene to identify the violation. Committee reports shall be submitted to the department head or supervisor only if they include the ombudsperson's signed statement that due process has been followed⁴.

If the ombudsperson cannot sign such a statement, then the ombudspersons shall report irregularities to the department head or supervisor and the dean or other administrator. After conferring with the ombudsperson, the department head, supervisor, dean or other administrator will determine what, if any, actions should be taken.

¹ This statement gives responsibility to the Provost's Office to establish the guidelines or best practices for implementation. Therefore, we have developed a separate document for the application of policy 405.6.5.

² It is the promotion and tenure committee chairperson's responsibility to request and confirm the participation of an ombudsperson for when the committee meets to review the candidate.

³ For some parts of the review process, an ombudsperson MAY be requested but is not required.

⁴ The ombudsperson can only judge whether or not due process was followed at the meeting. She/he does not have the ability or responsibility to determine if due process was followed in other aspects of the promotion and tenure process.

Ombudsperson Guidelines

The Provost's Office establishes the following guidelines for the ombudsperson policy 405.6.5:

1. The ombudsperson is not part of the P/T committee – he/she does not have a vested interest in the outcome of the P/T meeting aside from the process. The ombudsperson will verify that due process has been followed at the meeting.
2. The ombudsperson does not vote during the decision process.
3. The ombudsperson is required to have earned promotion with tenure, but does not have to be of rank equal to or greater than the candidate. For example, a tenured Associate Professor can serve as an ombudsperson on committees for faculty seeking promotion from Associate to Full Professor.
4. The ombudsperson will serve primarily on college committees. A faculty member cannot serve as an ombudsperson on a P/T committee in his/her own department. An ombudsperson may be asked to serve beyond his/her college but only in specific circumstances.
5. The ombudsperson is not permanently assigned to a promotion and tenure committee. The ombudsperson will serve as much as her/his schedule will allow.
6. The ombudsperson would be invited to the meeting in advance but does not have to review the file. He/she is present to guide the implementation of process, as outlined in policy 405.
7. It is the responsibility of the promotion and tenure committee chair to contact the ombudsperson in advance to schedule her/his participation.
8. The ombudsperson will sign the promotion and tenure committee's letter indicating that due process was followed at the meeting.
9. If the ombudsperson cannot sign a statement indicating due process was followed at the meeting, then she/he will report irregularities to the department head or supervisor and the dean or other administrator.
10. The Provost's Office will annually solicit and train a group of ombudspersons.
11. The Provost's Office will maintain the list of university ombudspersons for use on promotion and tenure committees. Whereas policy 405.6.5 does not indicate a term or limit to a term of service, the ombudsperson will be contacted each year to determine his/her willingness to serve. Some colleges or units may set term limits for the ombudsperson.