

2025 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

International Ombuds Association

Journal of the International Ombuds Association – Publishes Two Articles Related to Harassment, Bullying, and Incivility

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Prevention: Audience-specific anti-sexual harassment education
2. Prevention: Leadership Education and Skill Development
3. Prevention: Civility or Respect Promotion Programs
4. Response: Providing Anonymous and Non-mandatory Reporting Resources and Tools

Description of Work:

In the past year, the Journal of the International Ombuds Association published two new articles contributing to the ongoing dialogue about the ombuds' role in fostering fairness, justice, and constructive conflict resolution.

These articles reflect IOA's ongoing commitment to developing resources and tools that help organizations address complex interpersonal dynamics, especially regarding sexual harassment, in ways that empower individuals while respecting their anonymity, choice, and discretion. They also support policy improvements by assisting organizations in reevaluating their structures and practices amid increased awareness about power imbalances and the consequences of unfair treatment.

1. Rowe, M. (2025). An unusual harassment training that was warmly received—and, as well, inspired bystanders—an organizational ombuds story. *Journal of the International Ombuds Association* 16(2).

Abstract: Harassment and bullying are hard to endure and hard to stop. Many targets and bystanders fear to ask for help, fearing loss of relationships and other painful consequences. All organizations need training. However, sensitivity training about harassment is now unwelcome to many, and it is hard to prove such training is effective in terms of achieving desirable outcomes. This essay describes an effort to teach supervisors *how to receive harassment concerns competently and effectively*. Faculty and staff supervisors were asked to critique the performance of peers on videos—who were kind but making common mistakes—for their strengths and weaknesses as complaint-handlers. The training was voluntary, very well received, and effective in several different ways. Many organizations might adapt such training for their front-line supervisors.

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2. Farmer, Julia L. (2024). Navigating civility's baggage: Some thoughts for ombuds practitioners. *Journal of the International Ombuds Association*, 17(3).

Abstract: The idea of civility has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, as marginalized and disempowered groups have grappled with the ways in which calls for civility have been used to suppress dissent and maintain the status quo. This article describes some of the controversies around civility in more detail, including a look at the term's connection to histories of racial oppression, challenges to academic freedom and freedom of expression, and the NLRB's concept of protected concerted activity. It then offers some questions for ombuds practitioners to consider as they work through whether and how to reference civility in their own organizations.

Website for further information (if applicable):

<https://www.ombudsassociation.org/JIOA-Past-Issues>

Point of Contact Name: Dawn Osborne-Adams and Jessica Kuchta-Miller

Email Address for Point of Contact: dawnoa@unc.edu; jessica.kuchta-miller@duke.edu