

Resolution Number: RS19-379

March, 2019

Whereas:

RATIONALE: Currently, SF State does not employ an ombuds for students. An ombuds is an impartial and neutral person who works to resolve conflicts through collegial dialog effectively between peers without the involvement of administrative and/or legal protocols. Inspired by the Ombuds protocols already established at San Diego State, Humboldt State, CSU Bakersfield, and CSU Long Beach, Cal State East Bay, CSU San Bernardino, CSU Chico, Cal Maritime, Cal Poly Pomona, CSU San Marcos, CSU Bakersfield, CSU Northridge, San Jose State, CSU Channel Islands, among others, this resolution calls for the development of an ombuds position and office to serve students at SF State.

Whereas:

a student ombuds is a person appointed to facilitate collegial dialogue between students and faculty and administrator, who does not impose solutions, but acts as an impartial mediator in problem-solving and conflict resolution; and

Whereas:

there are often conflicts at the university between students and faculty, staff and administrators related to such concerns as academic freedom, disciplinary matters, discrimination, faculty governance and intellectual property, to name a few; and

Whereas:

a student ombuds position can result in a place for students to discuss their concerns and grievances with someone who can respect their privacy, provide a safe place to raise and discuss sensitive issues, maintain confidentiality within the limits of the law, provide a neutral venue for resolving conflict, facilitate collegial communication between aggrieved parties, seek information on issues and review facts, mediate discussion aimed at resolving conflict, and negotiate solutions to problems between students and staff, faculty and university administrators; and

Whereas:

conflict is often more satisfactorily resolved if informal means are first sought before proceeding to more formal means, such as grievances and lawsuits; and

Whereas:

students are often hampered in their ability to informally resolve conflict with faculty, staff and administrators who often hold formal and positional authority over students; and

Whereas:

a student ombuds is not currently a position at SF State, and thus, students are left with limited options for obtaining help in resolving conflicts informally; and

Whereas:

a need for this at SF State has already been demonstrated by the successful and well-used SF State Dean on Call program, which provides support and case management to students experiencing difficulties navigating the university, but is unable to focus on ombuds services exclusively due to other responsibilities; and

Whereas:

ombuds offices and positions are guided by the core values of independence, impartiality/neutrality, confidentiality and informality; and

Whereas:

a student ombuds position does not represent the university, participate in any formal processes, such as grievances, appeals or litigation, testify as a witness in any formal or legal action, influence or interfere with the H RTP process, maintain permanent records of individual matters, advocate for any party nor advocate for the university; and

Whereas:

the establishment of a student ombuds office could better serve San Francisco State's large and diverse population, through advocacy and referral to a variety of resources on or off campus; and

Whereas:

SF State has already demonstrated its commitment to informal negotiation, conflict resolution, and the ombuds practice through the establishment of an ombuds office for faculty; be it therefore

Resolved: that SF State establish an official student ombuds position and office; and be it further

Resolved: that this program should be expanded to an official student ombuds office; and be it further

Resolved: that the ombuds office establish a peer-based program that will allow students to seek problem solving and conflict resolution support from another San Francisco State student who is a certified ombuds; and be it further

Resolved: that the student ombuds office should maintain its independence from other university administrators, including academic affairs, student affairs, and other cabinet areas, and should hold “no other position in the organization which might compromise independence” ; and be it further

Resolved: that this office be set up to ensure independence and impartiality of the ombuds person relative to university faculty, staff and administrators; and be it further

Resolved: that the ombuds position be defined in accordance with the standards of practice and code of ethics created by the International Ombuds Association
