



## Chapel Hill's Office of the Ombuds Report of organizational trends and responses

July 2013

### Statement of Mission



The Ombuds Office is a part of the Town's comprehensive Wellness initiative to ensure that all people are valued for who they are and have equal and ready access to resources that enhance learning, serving and working together to build a community where people thrive. The functions of the Ombuds Office include (but are not limited to):

- Provide a safe and confidential forum to surface individual, group, and systemic concerns within the organization
- Listen to and help clarify concerns
- Help identify underlying issues and interests
- Explore possible options through formal and informal channels
- Facilitate healthy, value-based discussions where learning takes place
- Collect general data on emerging trends and patterns in our organization and make recommendations for systemic change

To date, approximately one half out of 700 employees have taken advantage of the resources offered by the Ombuds Office. We have worked with every department in some capacity. Many of the contacts have been proactive – seeking assistance for growth opportunities and sharing concerns around issues of:

- Equity – employees desiring inclusion and fairness for all
- Clarity – employees seeking understanding of policies, administrative changes, and how these effected their ability to do their jobs
- Trust – employees advocating for greater accountability from supervisors and management
- Access – employees wanting to know how and where to access resources for growth

### Lessons Learned:

- **Communications** is central to each of the issues identified. In these conversations Ombuds worked with employees and in some cases entire work groups to identify strategies to help them toward outcomes where they are valued for who they are, have ready and equal access to resources to enhance their learning, and are developing skills to communicate in ways consistent with Town RESPECT Values. Ombuds work with the Employee Forum has helped ensure that there are “representatives” in each department with accurate information about the three major workforce initiatives: Policy review & development; Compensation & Classifications Review; and Performance Management and Development.
- **Team** building is essential for creating an environment where we are all invested in serving and working together to build a community where people thrive. The Ombuds have worked proactively with several departments to build teams, plan for program changes, and explore strategies to work more effectively. The Library is an example of how our Office worked with an entire department around program changes due to transitions in both facilities and leadership, leading to communications, teamwork, values and wellness as foundational.
- **Partnerships** are key to ensuring the best people services. Internally, Ombuds is partnering with HRD and OEC to improve communications about proposed changes to policies and working with supervisors and managers to increase “face time” with employees in an effort to help enhance trust and accountability. Externally, Ombuds has worked with non-profits, the faith community, and the University, to mention a few, to form partnerships to ensure the best provision of people services.

## Next Steps



Ombuds is committed to the goals of creating an environment where the highest quality people services are demonstrated through:

- RESPECT values modeled in every interaction and in every relationship
- Communications, at and from all levels, is a priority
- Inquiry as foundational to each interaction
- Teams and partnerships encouraged, fostered, and nurtured
- Learning opportunities sought for all parties

The Ombuds Office is involved with a host of on-going activities to help support and sustain the TOCH being a place where people **WANT** to work; **understand** how what each of us does helps achieve the Vision and the Mission; **believe** that we can influence our work and how we do it; and **know** that we will be respected for who we are.

- Attendance at employee-sponsored events to ensure all employees are aware of and have ready access to Ombuds resources:
  - New employee orientations
  - Customer Service training
  - Public Works Day
  - Employee Appreciation Event
  - Employee Forum Meetings
- Regular communication with Employee Forum and General Management Team to ensure effective communications are maximized
- Building of the LINK360 Team - HRD, OEC and Ombuds to effectively manage and develop employee talent and opportunities for enhancement and communicate consistent commitment to values and wellness
- Broad-spectrum communication efforts listing opportunities and training that clearly define and communicate the Town's commitment to values and wellness and maximizing employee input at all levels
- Survey of employees understanding and use of the Ombuds office - Will be available online and in written form and distributed throughout the organization and in personal contacts.

**Rollout to Chapel Hill Community** - Ombuds services available September 16, 2013, to all who live, work, and play or pray in Chapel Hill.

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