



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

September 2013



Statement of Mission

As part of the Town's comprehensive Wellness initiative the Ombuds Office is a resource for employees to help them frame their value for who they are and ensure equal & ready access to resources that enhance learning, serving & working together to build a community where people thrive. The Ombuds Office is a resource for the community to help understand & access Town services. The functions of the Ombuds Office include (but are not limited to):

- When feeling frustrated, to identify opportunities, alternatives, resources & supports to achieve a positive outcome
- When feeling powerless, to recognize both personal power & personal responsibility
- When feeling confused or lost, to understand & navigate systems
- When experiencing conflict
 - Exploring strategies for defusing negative storms
 - Discovering common ground in a dispute
 - Discovering opportunities in conflicts
- When making decisions, to always consider the human impact

The Ombuds Office provides a safe & confidential forum to surface individual, group, & systemic concerns within the Town

In the first quarter of FY 2013-14 the Ombuds Office worked with 94 employees representing every department, 22 citizens, & 3 business people. Contacts were both proactive – seeking assistance for growth opportunities & sharing concerns around issues of:

- **Equity** – desiring inclusion & fairness for all, including opportunities for empowerment, independence & inclusion
- **Clarity** – seeking understanding of policies, administrative changes, & how these affected their ability to do their jobs. Equal access to timely & accurate communications is a recurring theme
- **Trust** – advocating for greater accountability from all employees, including supervisors & management
- **Access** – wanting to know how & where to access resources



Lessons Learned:

- **Values** become real when employees see everyone held accountable. Ombuds worked at quipping employees & supervisors with skills to address Values in workplace. Ombuds created the series for TOWNtalk highlighting a different RESPECT Value each edition where employees see Values as real.
- **Change & Communications** challenge everyone. During change timely & effective communications is essential. Ensuring the health of employees during change was facilitated by the Ombuds working with supervisors on timely communications, employee engagement through opportunities for input & processing, & seeing the consistency between the changes, Town RESPECT Values & the three major workforce initiatives: Policy review & development; Compensation & Classifications Review; & Performance Management & Development.
- **Team building** is essential for creating an environment where we are all invested in serving & working together to build a community where people thrive. The Ombuds Office worked proactively with several

departments to help build teams, plan for program changes, & explore strategies to work more effectively & efficiently.

- **Partnerships** are key to ensuring the best people services. Internally, Ombuds is partnering with HRD & OEC to improve communications about proposed changes to policies & working with supervisors & managers on training & on communications to increase “face time” with employees to enhance trust & accountability. Externally, Ombuds worked with non-profits, the faith community, & the University 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 involvement with a number of Town partners to help & sustain Chapel Hill being a place where people **WANT** to work; **understand** how what each does helps achieve the Vision and the Mission; **believes** that each one of us can influence our work & how we do it; & **knows** that we will be respected for who we are. These activities include working with:

- **LINK360** Team – (HRD, OEC & Ombuds) to:
 - Develop training for supervisors to help maximize the benefits of the EPMDs & to develop employee talent & opportunities for enhancement & for communicating consistent commitment to values & wellness
 - Follow-up with Senior Managers on working with departments around results from the Employee Engagement Survey
- Office of Sustainability to create and maintain a metric that will allow us to clearly define and publicize the Town’s commitment to wellness using the Ombuds office as an example. Such metrics will demonstrate employee understanding and usage of Ombuds program as a wellness resource
- CaPA on a laminated card that includes “I Want to Work in a Place Where . . .” on one side & Our Vision, Mission, Strategy & Values on the other side
- Individually with employees & with department heads to reinforce the following tenets in all interactions:
 - RESPECT values modeled in tangible ways
 - Communications, at & from all levels, is a priority
 - Inquiry as foundational to each interaction
 - Teams & partnerships encouraged, fostered, & nurtured
 - Learning opportunities sought for all parties
 - Broad-spectrum communication efforts listing opportunities & training that clearly define & communicate the Town’s commitment to values & wellness, maximizing employee input at all levels& and sustain a climate in which respectful discussions of differences are encouraged in creating opportunities for positive interactions & mutual problem solving
 - Survey of employees understanding & use of the Ombuds office - Will be available online & in written form throughout the organization & in personal contacts.

Town of Chapel Hill Ombuds Office
308 Rosemary Street, #202
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Ombuds@townofchapelhill.org
919.265.0806