

# **Principles of the Office of the Ombudsperson at The University of Texas at Austin**

## ***Confidential, Neutral, Independent, and Informal***

**Mission Statement:** The ombudsperson serves as a neutral third-party to provide assistance to students who have university-related concerns of a non-legal nature. The Office of the Ombudsperson is authorized to act independently to conduct fact-finding for both academic and non-academic concerns. The office recommends corrective measures on a systemic level.

### ***Confidential\****

To the extent practicable, the Office of the Ombudsperson will not share any information regarding your case with anyone outside the office without your expressed permission. Exceptions are made due to legal limitations including situations in which the office staff believes a student may be of harm to him or herself or others. Records are kept to track data trends as outlined in the confidentiality policy on the intake form. All reporting is conducted in a manner that protects the identity of individuals. Please note that email is not a confidential form of communication.

### ***Neutral\****

The Office of the Ombudsperson does not advocate for the student or for the university. It will consider the interests and concerns of all parties involved with the aim of assisting to develop fair and equitable solutions.

### ***Independent\****

The Office of the Ombudsperson is independent from other organizational entities and reports data trends directly to the Office of the President. The office operates as outlined under The University of Texas at Austin *General Information Catalog* and *Handbook of Operating Procedures*. The Office of the Ombudsperson exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a problematic trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The office may also choose to initiate action based on a concern identified by direct observation.

### ***Informal\****

The Office of the Ombudsperson has the authority to conduct informal fact-finding, which means it researches a concern in order to generate options for the parties involved. It does not make any official recommendations. It does not arbitrate, adjudicate, or participate in any internal or external formal process (including legal).

By telling a person at the Office of the Ombudsperson about a dispute or concern, the student has not informed or notified any university official and therefore the university cannot and will not take any action to remedy the situation. The Office of the Ombudsperson can refer a student to an appropriate person to speak to in order to request that the university take some action, if that is what the student wants.

\*A student cannot ask or expect the Office of the Ombudsperson to breach any principle outlined on this sheet. These principles are adopted as set forth from best standards of practice for organizational ombuds by the International Ombudsman Association. For questions, please call 512-471-3825.