

Ombuds Office at Missouri State

Dr. Chris Herr & Mary Bohlen

October 16, 2025

Faculty Senate

What is an Ombuds?

- Follows guidelines and standards of International Ombuds Association
- Entirely voluntary resource for staff, faculty, and students
- Goal is to listen carefully and sympathetically, and to provide information, guidance, and assistance to solve conflicts informally
- Helps inform university leadership on trends relative to systemic issues that may exist on campus

Who Are We?

- **Mary Bohlen**

- Office of Assessment & Accreditation (part of OIE)
- Part of MSU community since 1989—student, spouse, parent, staff.
- Additional roles at MSU—academic advisor, part-time position in Assessment in 2018-19
- Member of Staff Senate

- **Chris Herr**

- Theatre and Dance Department
- Ex-Faculty Senate Chair (2x)
- 21 years at MSU with wide experience and understanding of university processes

Principles of Ombuds Office

- **Independent**—direct report to President's office, (may identify problem areas for the university, but will *not* divulge personally identifiable information)
 - Does not make policy or decisions
 - Has no disciplinary role
 - Has complete discretion about how to handle issues or engage with people

Principles of Ombuds Office

- **Confidential**—unless required by law, no personally identifiable information about those seeking assistance will be recorded, maintained, or passed on.
 - Meetings are discreet and private (may happen on-campus or off-campus, as requested). On-campus meetings will take place in a central location.
 - To the extent permitted by law, information will be kept confidential, and any information disclosed publicly about the ombuds office (data or trends) must maintain confidentiality.

Principles of Ombuds Office

- **Informal**—does not participate in grievance processes or conduct investigations.
 - Voluntary, off-the-record participation, and only to the level approved by those seeking help.
 - No permanent records maintained by the office. Any temporary records are destroyed on a regular schedule.

Principles of Ombuds Office

- **Impartial**—does not take sides or mediate disputes.
 - Does not benefit from any side in dispute or concern.
 - Promotes fair processes and considers all points of view but does not advocate.
 - Facilitates communication and collaborative problem-solving.

Please Contact us:

- Direct Ombuds office email: (Ombuds@missouristate.edu)--not live yet
- Ombuds website (in progress)
- Personal cell phone:
 - Mary: (417) 771-0102
 - Chris: (417) 576-6444