

SOU FACULTY OMBUDS REPORT 2023

This report summarizes the activity and budget status for calendar year 2023.

INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Faculty Ombuds at Southern Oregon University was formally established in the fall of 2016. The **Faculty Ombuds is an informal, impartial, independent, neutral and confidential resource** that faculty can voluntarily seek out to discuss a campus-related matter. The Office provides timely, off-the-record, respectful, and objective conversations regarding academic or administrative questions, concerns, and/or conflicts. The faculty Ombuds can clarify University governance structures and identify options available to faculty but does not advocate for a particular entity. The Faculty Ombuds seeks fair process and open communication.

Dr. Cody Christopherson agreed to a second term and was the sole faculty Ombuds in calendar year 2023. Beginning in 2024, the Ombuds office expanded to include two faculty Ombuds. The new Ombuds is Dr. Rachel Jochem, who begins her two-year term January of 2023.

This report covers the third year of Cody's term and was submitted January 24, 2024.

2023 ACTIVITY

Visitors

In 2023, there were 15 visits from 14 visitors. According to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), the standard for Ombuds organizations is that the office would expect to see ~2-3% of the population in any year. At SOU, this would equate to 4-5 visitors per year, as was the case in the first two years of the SOU office. In 2023, the 7.8% rate is approximately double the standard expected rate and is the highest the rate has been since the office was

established in 2016. This may be partially explained by the email mishap discovered at the beginning of 2023, in which some visitors who contacted the office in 2022 were not responded to until January 2023 (see the 2022 report for details).

There were visitors from 3 of the 4 schools at SOU, with breakdown as follows:

College	Number of visitors
Arts & Communication	7
Science & Business	4
Social Sciences	3
Education, Leadership, Health, & Humanities	0

All visitors were sent a link to an anonymous survey following their visit. Three visitors responded, each one rating their satisfaction with their experience 5/5. When asked what was most useful about their visit, they responded:

“Sharing ideas; hearing other perspectives; receiving affirmation on some thoughts already considered.”

“The ability to talk openly about a concern with an impartial party. Being a junior faculty member can be isolating in normal circumstances and this has been exacerbated this past year, which makes it difficult to know what is “right” sometimes”

“having a thoughtful neutral sounding board at a moment where i did not know who to trust”

When asked for suggestions for future visitors, the only suggestion was to send out periodic reminders of the existence of the office, adding “This resource was pivotal when I needed it last year. THANK YOU”

Other Activity

Consistent with the original intention of the SOU Faculty Ombuds office, a second faculty Ombuds was recruited, screened, interviewed, and hired. The search committee was made up of Hala Schepmann (chairing the committee) and Kelly Szott (both representing X-Factor), Mark Krause (representing Faculty Senate), Rob Partridge (University general counsel), Erica Knotts (current SOU Student Ombuds), and Cody Christopherson (current faculty Ombuds). After advertising the position campus-wide, reviewing the interested parties, and interview process, the committee unanimously agreed to recommend Rachel Jochem for the position to President Rick Bailey. The committee's recommendation was accepted and Rachel began her new role as faculty Ombuds as of Jan 1, 2024.

The charter put forward in 2022 was signed by President Bailey and became effective as of August 29, 2023. It can be found here: [SOU Faculty Ombud Office Charter](#).

Total time spent on this office for 2023 is 42 hours. This includes the preparation of this report, consulting with X-Factor, checking emails, preparing and presenting materials for campus email distribution; recruiting, hiring, and consulting with the new in-coming faculty Ombuds, and updating the Ombuds website.

Expenses Incurred

Because the exact nature of the office was somewhat in flux, and because the incumbent Ombuds initially extended for six months before renewing for a full 2 year term, there were no membership expenses or other expenses in 2023.

Expected (2023)

Anticipated expenses for 2024 are \$10,640. This is the projected breakdown of expenses

Category (for new Ombuds)	Cost	Total cost
IOA Annual Dues	\$250	\$250
IOA Foundations course in-person	\$1695	\$1695
Airfare	\$800	\$800
Food per diem	4 days x \$70	\$280
Lodging per diem	5 nights x \$125	\$625
Additional phone line	\$10/month	\$120
Advertising expenses	\$100	\$100
4 ELU Teaching Release (TxT rate, 1 ELU = 35 hours)	4 ELU x \$750/ELU	\$3000
TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENSE PER NEW OMBUDS		\$6870

Category (for continuing Ombuds)	Cost	Total cost
IOA Annual Dues	\$250	\$250
Professional Development Course (3 days)	\$1695	\$1695
Airfare	\$800	\$800
Food per diem	4 days x \$70	\$280
Lodging per diem	5 nights x \$125	\$625
Additional phone line	\$10/month	\$120

TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENSE PER CONTINUING OMBUDS		\$3775
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LOOKING FORWARD: 2024

At the time of writing this report, Cody Christopherson has completed the first year of his second two-year term, ending January 1, 2025. Rachel Jochem expects to complete a two year term ending January 1, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Cody Christopherson, January 24, 2024

SOU Faculty Ombuds (2023)