

Year 1 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

International Ombudsman Association

**Project 2: Special Journal Edition**

**This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s):**

13 and 14

**Description of Work:** Special Edition of the Journal of the International Ombudsman Association.

**OVERVIEW:** The Journal of the International Ombudsman Association (JIOA) announced a call for papers/stories for a special edition on responses of the organizational ombuds to sexual harassment with a submission deadline of May 7, 2020. JIOA invited submissions that focused on organizational ombuds' range of experiences in responding to and assisting with sexual harassment concerns, from the most typical to the most significant and challenging.

**DESCRIPTION:** In the present era, social awareness of sexual harassment around the world is more heightened than ever, with significant implications for how these cases are handled within organizations. Internal IOA surveys have documented that ombuds frequently are called upon to help with sexual harassment concerns within their organizations.

However, organizational ombuds are ensnared in a paradox: They need to raise awareness and accurate understanding of their work, demonstrate their value to their organizations and society, and share best practices within the profession. And yet, if ombuds talk openly about what they do, they risk violating their own ethical principles and standards of practice and undermining their effectiveness. The JIOA Special Issue on Responses of the Organizational Ombuds to Sexual Harassment will protect privacy and anonymity of authors so that ombuds stories of assisting with sexual harassment concerns can be safely told, analyzed collectively, and used as a source of learning.

The Special Issue will have two parts:

**PART ONE:** The main goal of part one is to increase understanding of how ombuds respond to sexual harassment within their organizations.

Each ombuds author will tell the story of an experience assisting with sexual harassment concerns in the time period leading up to or during the current "MeToo" era, including details such as the challenges they faced, successful and unsuccessful practices, outcomes achieved, and lessons learned. We encourage submissions that will enable the Special Issue to depict the

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diversity of visitors who receive assistance from the ombuds, such as people of color, LGBT individuals, and men as well as women. Each narrative will be published anonymously.

Submissions for part one may address questions such as the following (among other questions authors may wish to address). All published narratives will be written by ombuds authors in first person ("I").

1. How are your ombuds practices enabled and restricted when assisting with sexual harassment situations? Do you practice according to the IOA Standards of Practice? Are you a mandatory reporter under organizational policy, the Cleary Act, or Title IX?
2. How did you learn about the sexual harassment situation?
3. What were your first thoughts and reactions upon hearing about this case?
4. How did you become involved?
5. What was articulated about why the visitor came to the ombuds for assistance? How important was confidentiality in the visitor's decision to tell someone what happened?
6. How, if at all, did other offices/roles influence the situation? In what ways were interactions with other offices helpful or challenging?
7. What was your understanding of what happened and how did your understanding change over time?
8. How did you approach meeting(s) with visitor(s)? What were your reasons for using this approach?
9. What skills, methods and strategies did you choose to use, and why? What was the purpose behind each of your choices?
10. What options did you discuss with visitor(s) or others? What reasoning was behind the options that were selected?
11. What options were implemented, and what were the outcomes?
12. How did you work with others involved in the case, and why?
13. What challenges did you encounter? How did you work with or attempt to overcome the challenges?
14. What surprised you about this case, and why?
15. How was your involvement in this case beneficial? What value did it have for the visitor(s), organization, and/or others? How, if at all, was this communicated to your organization and others?

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16. What impact, if any, did your handling of this matter have on your office's relationship with other formal or informal channels within your organization?
17. What were the negative effects, if any? How, if at all, were you at least partly responsible for them?
18. What would you have done differently, knowing what you know now?

PART TWO: The main goal of part two is to analyze the collection of narratives selected for part one, identifying themes and patterns across stories, to shed light on ombuds work in sexual harassment cases.

Authors who agree to submit a paper for part two will be given a copy of the anonymous ombuds narratives selected for part one. Each author in part two is asked to adopt a clear conceptual/theoretical framework or perspective (for example, legal, psychological, economic, ethical, critical, feminist, multicultural, communication, conflict resolution, philosophical, or organizational development), analyze the narratives using qualitative/thematic or quantitative/content analysis, and draw conclusions. The papers might focus on issues such as the value of ombuds work, the place of ombuds within their organizations, the role of the ombuds in helping people engage with other services, ombuds identities, social justice issues, advocacy and neutrality, relations of power, what we can learn about ombuds practices and standards of practice, ways to improve or expand ombuds work, a legal or political agenda for advancement of the profession, self-care concerns, etc.

An updated Call for Papers for part two will be distributed in Summer of 2020.

**Website for further information (if applicable):** Pending

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