



GSO Senate Resolution 15.12

A Resolution Concerning an Ombudsperson Office

Whereas, there have been several recent incidents involving grievances of students, faculty, and staff towards Syracuse University, including but not limited to: the issues brought forward by THE General Body, the closing of the Advocacy Center, and the restructuring of the University Promotion Procedures, and;

Whereas, in response to THE General Body's documentation of Demands and Grievances, the University Leadership has promised to explore additional avenues for concerns to be addressed, and;

Whereas, conflict and lack of information inevitably arise in a complex organization and it is imperative to operations and morale that conflicts be resolved, and;

Whereas, Syracuse University lacks an office that provides informal guidance on grievance procedures, and grievance procedures are often hard to navigate for students, faculty, and staff, and;

Whereas, people often need a confidential sounding board before they can make an informed decision about how to proceed in a matter, and;

Whereas, a confidential and informal conflict management resource can lower the threshold for seeking help disputes and other matters of concern, thus allowing issues to be solved before they become intractable, and;

Whereas, an ombudsperson office can provide an 'off the record' and neutral resource for students, faculty, and staff to be informed about their rights and the workings of grievance procedures, as well as serving as a center for informal resolution, and;

Whereas, according to the International Ombudsman Association, "The primary duties of an organizational ombudsman are (1) to work with individuals and groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution," and;

Whereas, the International Ombudsman Association further states that an ombudsperson office must operate under the key principles of confidentiality, neutrality, independence, and informality, and;

Whereas, students have access to resources, such as Office of Student Assistance, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Student Grievance Process, that serve functions similar to an

ombudsperson office, but none can preserve boundaries of confidentiality, neutrality, independence, and informality that define the operations of an ombudsperson office, and an ombudsperson office can supplement these resources, and;

Whereas, Staff and Faculty do not have access to an independent, confidential, neutral, and informal resource, and whereas there is widespread need for such a resource, and;

Whereas, power differences between individuals in conflict can make it difficult for people to confront issues, including when there are problematic patterns that do not rise to the level of formal grievances, and;

Whereas, the core principles of independence, confidentiality, neutrality, and informality create a safe space for individuals to come forward with questions and matters of concern and gain insight on how best to resolve these issues, and;

Whereas, several historical allies of the GSO have worked on proposals for an ombudsperson, including the University Senate, therefore be it:

Resolved, that the GSO Senate join with the Student Association, University Senate, and other constituencies in the University community to develop a plan for an ombudsperson office involving the above named characteristics, and;

Resolved, that the GSO Senate will vet this plan before being presented to University Leadership and, if approved, strongly urge the Leadership to enact this proposal, and;

Resolved, that this plan will be presented to the Senate by no later than the end of Spring Semester 2015.