

2025-2026 Ombudsperson Report

August 15, 2026

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To: Faculty Senate

From: University Ombudspersons (Barbara Anderson, Alfred Cochran, Kim Wagner)

Re: 2025-2026 Annual Reports

This report presents the activities of the K-State Ombudspersons from mid-August 2025 to late July 2026. The information provided comes from three ombudspersons. Our activities have been combined to provide an aggregate view of our work, to protect confidentiality, and to maintain the anonymity of those with whom we work. All conversations, actions, and outcomes are privileged information. No specific information about any individual(s) or their status is provided.

University Ombuds continue to be an essential confidential resource for employees as they seek out information, raise concerns, and work toward mutually satisfactory solutions in the workplace. The charts below show numbers of consultees and hours expended in each of the last three years.

2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
98 Consultees	42 Consultees	19 Consultees
128 Consultation Hours	75 Consultation Hours	74 Consultation Hours

There were 19 consultees who visited an ombudsperson within the 2025-2026 timeframe. Ombuds spent 74 hours providing consultative services. Consultees tended to be self-referrals or found us via suggestions from other colleagues or Human Resources. A summary of concerns that resulted in consultation is provided below.

Ombudspersons	# of Consultees	Consultation Hours
Anderson, Cochran, Wagner	11/4/4	29/27/18

Nature of Consultee Concerns

**For some consultees, multiple complaints were discussed.*

***See full definitions at the end of this report.*

Consultee Concern	Number	Consultee Concern	Number
ADA		HCS-Organizational Development	2
Appeal		HCS-Payroll	
Attendance		HCS-Talent Acquisition	
Change	2	Interpersonal Conflict	9
COVID-19		Nonrenewal	3
Discipline	1	Performance	3
Discrimination/Harassment	4	Policy	3
Evaluation	6	PRC	
Furlough		Promotion and Tenure	3
Hearing and/or Grievance	1	Unfair Treatment	14
HCS-Benefits		Work Environment	8
HCS-Compensation	2	Workload	2

Ombuds empathetically listen to concerns, clarify, and identify pertinent policies and resources, and offer communication strategies to individuals to resolve issues that might otherwise escalate into adversarial and time-consuming formal processes. This “insider” knowledge allows the Ombuds to make recommendations for systemic change to promote transparency, clarity, and equity across the University.

Below are the recommendations for the 2025-2026 reporting year:

- 1. Develop and implement a voluntary, university-wide mentoring program for faculty and staff to foster positive, supportive relationships; share best practices; clarify institutional culture; and contextualize changes.***
- 2. Provide front-line supervisors with additional training focused on effective employee leadership, coaching, and performance development. Supervisors play a critical role in employee success. Equipping them with the skills to identify performance gaps, provide constructive feedback, and develop individualized improvement strategies can lead to stronger employee engagement and better organizational outcomes.***

This training could include techniques for recognizing when an employee would benefit from additional instruction, creating development plans, delivering effective coaching conversations, and utilizing available resources to support employee growth. By emphasizing development before discipline whenever appropriate, supervisors can help employees build confidence, improve performance, and contribute more effectively to the organization.
- 3. Enhanced training for front-line leaders, such as program directors and Dept./Unit Heads, regarding University Handbook and PPM compliance and interpretation, effective leadership/organizational management, and group facilitation practices.***
 - a. Renewed focus on the University’s Principles of Community, as unprofessional actions and speech continue to contribute to interpersonal conflict.***
 - i. Clarity that we encourage differences of opinion communicated with respect so that we can avoid being stuck in patterns that are not working.***
 - ii. Clarity that academic citizenship thrives when we work together to seek solutions through authentic communication and compromise rather than chilling speech and participation by requiring faculty and staff to ‘go along to get along.’***
 - iii. Clarity that we treat everyone with respect and that the ends do not justify the means.***
 - b. Training about microaggressions and bullying – and how to respond to such behavior.***
 - c. More training on the performance evaluation process.***
 - i. *Continued delay in fully and holistically addressing the recommendations may prolong concerns that can be addressed at the personal, interpersonal, or unit level.***
- 4. Review of Tenure and Promotion documents across each department/unit to ensure consistency and understanding at the individual, departmental, and Provost levels, per Provost Office requirement up to date within the five-year review cycle.***
- 5. Standing annual meetings with Ombudspersons and University Provost to communicate themes, needs, etc.***

Concern Definitions

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ADA – individuals seeking information about an accommodation

Appeal – USS employees requesting a hearing through one of the hearing bodies

Attendance – concerns about employees not attending work as expected (tardiness, excessive absences)

Change – concerns about changes to work hours, job duties, structure

Discipline – concerns about disciplinary actions and either imposing or receiving an action

Discrimination/Harassment – concerns about being treated differently based on PPM 3010 (referred to OIE)

Evaluation – concerns about how to conduct an evaluation or from an individual who has questions about an evaluation they have received.

Hearing and/or Grievance: Unclassified employees requesting information about an administrative appeal and/or grievance hearing.

HCS – Benefits – concerns about different kinds of leave, tuition assistance or other benefits

HCS – Compensation – concerns about pay

HCS – Organizational Development – concerns about changes in organizational structure, working out of one's classification

HCS – Payroll – concerns about paychecks and/or deductions from paychecks

HCS – Talent Acquisition – concerns about recruitments or applications

Interpersonal Conflict – concerns about getting along with another person or group

Nonrenewal – concerns about a notice of nonrenewal

Performance – concerns about performance coaching and feedback and consequences of poor performance

Policy – questions about policies i.e. is there a policy, where is it located, what is the appropriate interpretation and application

PRC – USS employees appeal disciplinary actions to this body

Promotion & Tenure – concerns about the tenure clock, denial of promotion and/or tenure

Unfair Treatment – concerns about being treated differently or unfairly based on something not covered in PPM 3010

Work Environment – concerns about the work environment being uncomfortable either physically or emotionally

Workload – concerns about level of workload based on contract