

Program Overview	
Program:	Ombudsman
Academic Year:	2018/2019
Review Period:	6 Year

A. Description and Goals

1. Describe the program and/or service area under review and how the program supports the mission of Santa Monica College.

The Ombuds office serves as an informal and confidential service that helps students who are facing problems on campus by finding productive ways to solve their problems or have their concerns addressed. The office accomplishes this by mediating problems between students and faculty, explaining college policies to students, or helping faculty develop approaches to preventing potential problems or solving current classroom problems. The Ombuds office is not an official office of complaint for the college, and the ombuds do not take part in any formal complaint processes, such as grade appeal or Honor Council hearings.

Ombuds may clarify and explain college policies and procedures. Ombuds may coach students on how to approach their professors with concerns. Often, ombuds help students investigate how a grade was earned. In addition to supporting students, the office supports the faculty.

The ombuds regularly consult with department chairs and faculty members on issues such as classroom management and grading policies.

The ombuds office supports the mission of SMC by serving all of its diverse population and supporting each individual as a unique member of the community. The office seeks to improve communication, foster collegiality, and promote fair and equitable practices in the classroom and across campus.

2. Identify the overarching goal(s) or charge/responsibilities of the program or service area. If appropriate, include ensuring/monitoring compliance with state, federal or other mandates.

The Ombuds office adheres to the International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice. The Ombuds office works to remain independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible given the positions of the ombuds within Santa Monica College. The ombuds seek to remain unaligned and impartial, not engaging in situations that could create conflicts of interest. The ombuds hold all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and do not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The ombuds do not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to their attention. When the ombuds observe a cluster or pattern of similar dysfunctional, unethical, inequitable problems, they may alert administrators, chairs, and/or other appropriate campus leaders.

3. If applicable, describe how the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), Supporting Goals, and/or Strategic Initiatives of the institution are integrated into the goals of the program or

service area.

The SMC Mission states that “Santa Monica College provides a safe, inclusive, and dynamic learning environment that encourages personal and intellectual exploration – one that challenges and supports students in achieving their educational goals.” When students come to the Ombuds office for help with a difficult situation or to dispute a grade, the ombuds ensure they can freely and safely express their concerns. Because the office is confidential, students can be assured that there will be no negative consequences for them as a result of them coming to the office.

Additionally, when students feel unfairly treated by an instructor or other staff member on campus, the office helps students share their concerns in a way that is appropriate and productive. When students come to the office, the ombuds seek to help them better understand and cope with college life, and to help them better understand how to manage the rules, structures, and processes at Santa Monica College.

The SMC Mission states “the College recognizes that each individual makes a critical contribution to the achievement of this mission.” When students come to the Ombuds office for help, the ombuds ensure they have privacy and that their individual situation gets full attention. Each situation is treated distinctively based upon the needs of the student and the facts of the case. Each case is addressed with the intention of ensuring the student’s rights are respected and that student is treated equitably.

The SMC Mission states “Santa Monica College's academic programs and support services are intended to serve diverse individuals from local, national, and global communities who are seeking high-quality, affordable undergraduate education.” The Ombuds office serves the entire student population. The doors are open to any student who seeks the services of the Ombuds office. The ombuds tailor how they intervene in each case to the needs of each student in that particular case.

ILO #1 states that students will “acquire the self-confidence and self-discipline to pursue their intellectual curiosities with integrity in both their personal and professional lives.” The Ombuds office wants students, upon completion of working with an ombuds, to exhibit, through their behavior, a heightened sense of personal efficacy and responsibility.

ILO #2 states that students will “obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to access, evaluate, and interpret ideas, images, and information critically in order to communicate effectively, reach conclusions, and solve problems.” The Ombuds office wants students, upon completion of working with an ombuds, to make appropriate use of the information and options received to resolve their concerns.

ILO #5 states that students will “demonstrate a level of engagement in the subject matter that enables and motivates the integration of acquired knowledge and skills beyond the classroom.” The Ombuds office wants students, upon completion of working with an ombuds, to demonstrate a level of engagement in the ombuds process which indicates they will apply the knowledge and/or principles learned working with the ombuds beyond the particular issue or concern brought to the Ombuds office.

The Ombuds office wants to help students become more effective college students, such that

students are able to think critically about their circumstances and about how to resolve challenges they may face. We want students to take the problem-solving skills they used to resolve a particular issue and apply them to other experiences and challenges in their lives.

4. If your program receives operating funding from any source other than District funds identify the funding source. If applicable, note the start and end dates of the funding (generally a grant), the percentage of the program budget supported by non-District funding, and list any staff positions funded wholly or in part by non-District funds. Do not include awards for non-operational items such as equipment (ex. VTEA) or value added activities (ex Margin of Excellence).

Not applicable

B. Populations Served

All Disciplines (answered once)

1. Describe the students your program serves in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, age, residency status, citizenship, educational goal, enrollment status, and full/part-time status. Note any changes in student or enrollment data since the last program review.

All students at SMC are eligible for our services. We do not distinguish between part-time and full time status of students. We do not keep specific records about students' ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, educational goals, gender, age, etc. Due to the confidential, informal, and sensitive nature of the work done in the Ombuds office, demographic data is not collected.

To see the data we do have about the types of cases we've handled, please see the "Attach Files" section.

2. Compare your student population with the college demographic. Are the students in your program different from the college population? Reflect on whether your program is serving the targeted student population.

Students who use our services are similar to the college population. We are open to all students who wish to avail themselves of our services and therefore do not have a specific target student population.

3. Discuss any significant change(s) in the population(s) served since the last full program review and the possible reasons for the change(s).

We have noticed an increase of faculty consultations. Anecdotally, we have also noticed an increase in distance education students and those with learning disabilities.

C. Program Evaluation

All Disciplines (answered once)

1. List your student or instructional support service SLOs or UOs.

SLOs are specific, measurable statements of what a student should know, be able to do, or value when they complete a program/course or sequence of activities. An SLO focuses on specific knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors that students will demonstrate or possess as a result of instruction or program activity.

UO statements focus on service or operational outcomes such as:

- *Volume of unit activity*
- *Efficiency (responsiveness, timeliness, number of requests processed, etc.)*
- *Effectiveness of service in accomplishing intended outcomes (accuracy, completeness, etc.)*
- *Compliance with external standards/regulations*
- *Client/customer satisfaction with services*

In 2016, the Ombuds office developed three new Student Learning Outcomes, each mapped to a distinct ILO:

SLO 1 states that upon completion of working with an ombuds, students will “exhibit, through their behavior, a heightened sense of personal efficacy and responsibility.” SLO 1 is mapped to ILO 1.

SLO 2 states that upon completion of working with an ombuds, students will “make appropriate use of the information and options received to resolve their concerns.” SLO 2 is mapped to ILO 2.

SLO 3 states that upon completion of working with an ombuds, students will “demonstrate a level of engagement in the Ombuds process which indicates they will apply the knowledge and/or principles learned working with the Ombuds beyond the particular issue or concern brought to the Ombuds.” SLO 3 is mapped to ILO 5.

Essentially, these outcomes reflect our interests in helping students become more effective college students, such that students are able to think critically about their circumstances and how to resolve challenges they may face, and such that students are able to take the problem-solving skills they used to resolve a particular issue and apply them to other experiences and challenges in their lives.

2. Describe when and how the program assesses these SLOs and UOs and uses the results to inform program planning including:

- how outcomes are assessed and how often
- the assessment tool(s) used
- the sample (who gets assessed)

- how and when the program reviews the results and who is engaged in the process

The above SLOs drive the work the ombuds do with students and continue to reflect what we want for students after they come to the Ombuds office. When the ombuds meet to evaluate cases and consult with each other, the outcomes typically frame the discussion and evaluation of their work.

However, while the ideas reflected in the above outcomes drive the office's work with students and inform its reflection and discursive evaluation of that work, the ombuds have come to recognize that for the purpose of Program Review, the Ombuds office would be better served by developing and assessing Unit Outcomes rather than Student Learning Outcomes. For a variety of reasons, e.g. why students come to the office, whether the office can help them, the unique nature of each situation, confidentiality, informality, the office cannot assess SLOs or use such assessments to evaluate its work.

The Ombuds office has decided to develop three new Unit Outcomes that will be assessed moving forward.

New UO #1, the Ombuds office will track key trends and share those trends with appropriate Vice Presidents and faculty leaders. At most colleges and universities that have Ombuds programs, the ombuds report general, observed trends to the President. We believe that at SMC the office could serve the institution well by annually sharing the general trends it observes with the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and with leaders of college initiatives that could benefit from such information.

New UO #2, the Ombuds office will seek to maintain campus wide awareness of the service. The office will seek to raise student awareness of the confidential service and what it offers, and to maintain its presence for students. Also, the office will seek to raise faculty awareness of the confidential service and what it offers.

New UO #3, the Ombuds office will follow the International Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics reflects a commitment to promote ethical conduct in the performance of the Ombudsman role and to maintain the integrity of the ombuds profession.

3. What other evaluation measures does your student or instructional support service use to inform planning? (For example, surveys, longitudinal data, support service use etc.) Note trends, differences in performance by group (ethnicity, gender, age), and any unusual patterns in student success and retention.

The ombuds meet once per week to discuss cases – the details of cases and the actions taken. Together they reflect on how well each of them handled their cases and how they might approach such cases in the future. Those reflections are guided in part by the now defunct Ombuds' SLOs and the International Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice and Ethics.

To see the data we do have about the types of cases we've handled, please see the "Attach Files"

section.

D1. Objectives

We wish to, at least, maintain the level of service that we have been able to provide to the campus. With our new marketing brochure we may be able to expand the number of people we serve.

Status: Completed

Comments:

We abide by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice.

Status: In Progress

Comments:

The Standards of Practice are posted in the office and regularly referenced during cases and during evaluation of cases.

Yvonne Ortega will take a sabbatical in the Spring 2018 semester. We will determine how best to cover her hours and contributions to the office while she is away.

Status: Completed

Comments:

Eric Oifer covered the office while Yvonne Ortega was away.

So as to maintain campus wide awareness of the service, the Ombuds office will distribute its flyer to offices across campus, will visit an AS meeting to inform it about the service, and will continue to seek to visit departments, both on its own and as part of the Care and Prevention team presentations.

Status: In Progress

Comments:

We believe the Ombuds is a valuable service that supports the college's effort to better serve students and to treat students equitably. The more that students, staff, and faculty know of the service and how it can help them reduce conflict and enhance student success and equity the better the college will be able to serve the mission.

The Ombuds office could serve the institution well by annually sharing the general trends it observes about the cases it handles with the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and with leaders of college initiatives that could benefit from such information. Currently, no process or mechanism exists for doing this, but we believe there should be.

Status: In Progress

Comments:

This objective reflects a standard practice in higher education. Typically, Ombuds offices report directly to the president of the university or college. They provide both the president and the public with information about overarching trends they are seeing. Because such offices do not report to any other offices on campuses and are not typically part of the college bureaucracy, the report can be seen as an impartial snap shot that can be used by the institution to reflect upon its work

On a weekly basis, when the Ombuds meet to discuss cases, the International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice will be used as part of the discussion to assess the work of the office. Additionally, as the office develops its annual report of trends, it will review how well the standards of practice were used to inform its work.

Status: In Progress

Comments:

To ensure the Ombuds office does its work in line with accepted standards established by professionals in the field, the SMC office should regular review and reflect upon the standards.

D1. Looking Back

1. Describe any accomplishments, achievements, activities, initiatives undertaken, and any other positives the program wishes to note and document.

The ombuds has handled an increase in complaints over the past several years.

Academic Year	Number of Complaints
2011-2012	346
2012-2013	348
2013-2014	342
2014-2015	348
2015-2016	400
2016-2017	408
2017-2018	404

The bare statistics do not provide a sense of the complexity and the nuanced nature of the issues and the amount of time devoted to each visitor. Some cases are straightforward while others require additional follow up and multiple interactions with students and faculty members involved.

In Academic Year 2017-2018, the Ombuds Office handled a total number of 404 cases. The types of cases were as follows:

Type of visits	Total
Grade Concerns	171
Instructor conduct	101
Title IX consultation	2
Cheating allegations	20
Discrimination claims	8
Disruptive classroom behavior	8
Distance Education issues	3
Attendance issues	26
Financial Aid/Admissions Issues	11
College policies	38

Faculty consultations	5
Disabled Student Services	8

As indicated from the types of cases most often discussed during an ombuds' office visit were grade concerns at 43% of the cases. The second most discussed topic was instructor conduct. This data reinforces the challenges students have navigating difficult/sensitive topics with faculty members. It is important students learn how to approach faculty in regards to grade disputes and concerns while balancing self-advocacy. It also reflects the challenges faced by faculty members that must create a learning environment that balances equity, safety, free speech and advocacy.

Other accomplishments and activities:

1. The Ombuds office began using an online, confidential appointment system. This replaced the makeshift paper system that was previously in use.
2. As part of his service in the Ombuds office, Eric Oifer serves on the Care and Prevention Team. With others from the team he attended the 2018 NaBITA regional conference at Ventura College.
3. The ombuds staff members presented to college faculty during a workshop on Spring 2017 Institutional Flex Day.
4. Yvonne Ortega participated in the 2016 VIP Welcome day and presented resources/information to incoming students and their parents.
5. Eric Oifer participated on a panel at 2018 VIP Welcome day to present information to parents about Ombuds services on campus.
6. As the Ombuds office has a presence on the Care and Prevention Team (CPT), the Ombuds shared information about the office at each of the 5-10 CPT presentations on campus.
7. With the assistance of SMC Community and Academic Relations staff, the ombuds office was able to increase outreach efforts by creating a brochure and display the information on televised monitors throughout the campus where students gather, including campus cafeteria, library, Associated Students Center as well as various counseling programs on campus. (brochure included as an attachment)

2. Summarize how the program or service area addressed the recommendations for program strengthening from the executive summary of the previous six-year program review.

Recommendations from executive summary of the previous six-year program review:

1. Develop methods for consistently collecting data without breaching confidentiality.

Consistent with our shift from using SLOs to using UOs to assess the work of the office, we will seek to collect data that can be used to inform the operations of the office. We have developed three pieces of information that we can track:

a. We can ask students who use the service how they heard of the Ombuds office. This may help us understand how to market our services and how to target that marketing

b. We can track how the Ombuds office was contacted by the students who sought to use the service. This may help us tailor how we make ourselves available and how we communicate with students.

c. We can track when the office is utilized - which hours during the day, which days of the week, which weeks during the semester. We may use this information to help us schedule the office and to help us target our marketing in response to usage patterns.

2. Design a faculty survey to collect feedback on the services offered; use the results to better inform planning.

While the Ombuds office is available to faculty members for consultation, the Ombuds office primarily exists to serve students, not faculty. We do not believe surveying faculty will help us plan or improve the service. We do believe that educating the faculty about the Ombuds office and the role it plays is an ongoing responsibility. The ombuds seek to raise awareness and understanding of the service among faculty by engaging in such practices as presenting to departments, presenting at department chairs meetings, and offering flex day workshops.

3. Describe any changes or activities your program or service area has made that are not addressed in the objectives, identify the factors (e.g., licensure requirements, state or federal requirements, CCCO mandates, regulations, etc.) that triggered the changes, and indicate the expected or anticipated outcomes.

Not applicable.

4. If your program received one time funding of any kind indicate the source, how the funds were spent and the impact on the program (benefits or challenges).

In November 2016, Eric Oifer and Yvonne Ortega attended the California Caucus of College and University Ombuds. Funding for their attendance came from the Equity Committee. The conference provide invaluable professional development and training. The principles and practices learned at the conference regularly find their way into the ongoing work of the office.

D2: Moving Forward

Discuss and summarize conclusions drawn from data, assessments (SLO, UO) or other evaluation measures identified in Section C and indicate responses or programmatic changes planned for the coming year(s) including:

- how the assessment results are informing program goals and objectives, program planning, and decision-making
- specific changes planned or made to the program based on the assessment results

The Ombuds staff meet each week to discuss the cases they have handled. During those meetings they review facts of cases, actions taken, strategies to address the situation, and reflection for handling future similar cases. Additionally, the Ombuds discuss trends they observe and how they might share those observed trends with those on campus whose work might be impacted by such information. We believe information about these observed trends could help people across campus reflect on practices and policies that impact students. For example, last year the Ombuds office helped quite a few students who were negatively impacted by attendance and drop policies. Such information might help Academic Affairs better understand the gaps in the faculty's knowledge of laws and college policies that effect its work. We hope the college finds a systematic way to receive information from the Ombuds office about the trends it is observing.

D2: Objectives

Objective #1

Objective: We abide by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice.

Area/ Discipline/ Function Responsible: All

Assessment Data and Other Observations:

External Factors:

Timeline and activities to accomplish the objective:

Describe how objective will be assessed/measured:

Comments:

Objective #2

Objective:

So as to maintain campus wide awareness of the service, the Ombuds office will distribute its flyer to offices across campus, will visit an AS meeting to inform it about the service, and will continue to seek to visit departments, both on its own and as part of the Care and Prevention team presentations.

Area/ Discipline/ Function Responsible: All

Assessment Data and Other Observations:

Other data or observed trends

The Ombuds office is a valuable service that helps the college better serve its students and better meet its goals of equity. The more people are aware of the office and the services it provides, the better the office can serve the college

External Factors:

Timeline and activities to accomplish the objective: This should be an annual objective. Due to the turnover of students, staff and faculty (particularly the part time faculty), this objective renews on an annual basis. The departments we visit and where we share information should be informed by an assessment of need. This assessment of need is done through regular conversations among the Ombuds and informed by observed trends

among cases.

Describe how objective will be assessed/measured: The Ombuds will be completed when it counts and tracks the steps it took during the academic year to inform the college community of its service.

Comments: We believe the Ombuds is a valuable service that supports the college's effort to better serve students and to treat students equitably. The more that students, staff, and faculty know of the service and how it can help them reduce conflict and enhance student success and equity the better the college will be able to serve the mission.

Objective #3

Objective:

The Ombuds office could serve the institution well by annually sharing the general trends it observes about the cases it handles with the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and with leaders of college initiatives that could benefit from such information. Currently, no process or mechanism exists for doing this, but we believe there should be.

Area/ Discipline/ Function Responsible: All

Assessment Data and Other Observations:

Other data or observed trends

N/A

External Factors:

Timeline and activities to accomplish the objective: Typically, annual program review asks for our report/data relatively early in the spring semester. This means our data is always incomplete. To properly meet this objective, the trends should be based upon data that is collected through the full academic year, from the summer through the spring.

Describe how objective will be assessed/measured: Assuming the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and other campus leaders want to see the trends, the office can provide a summary report with a table of the data to those people early in the summer following the relevant academic year.

Comments: This objective reflects a standard practice in higher education. Typically, Ombuds offices report directly to the president of the university or college. They provide both the president and the public with information about overarching trends they are seeing. Because such offices do not report to any other offices on campuses and are not typically part of the college bureaucracy, the report can be seen as an impartial snap shot that can be used by the institution to reflect upon its work.

Objective #4

Objective:

On a weekly basis, when the Ombuds meet to discuss cases, the International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice will be used as part of the discussion to assess the work of the office. Additionally, as the office develops its annual report of trends, it will review how well the standards of practice were used to inform its work.

Area/ Discipline/ Function Responsible: All

Assessment Data and Other Observations:

External Factors:

Other Factors

The IOA Standards of Practice is an important tool that ombuds offices should use to guide and inform their work.

Timeline and activities to accomplish the objective: At the end of each year, the office will actively review the standards and reflect upon whether it did its work in ways that are consistent with those standards.

Describe how objective will be assessed/measured: The objective will be completed when the Ombuds have the annual discussion to review its work.

Comments: To ensure the Ombuds office does its work in line with accepted standards established by professionals in the field, the SMC office should regular review and reflect upon the standards.

E. Curriculum Review

1. Discuss how the department reviews, revises, and creates new curriculum. Include the following information:

- The process by which department members participate in the review and revision of curriculum.
- How program goals and SLOS are integrated into course design and curriculum planning.
- The relationship of program courses to other college programs (cross-listing, overlapping content)
- The rationale for any changes to pre-requisites, co-requisites and advisories.
- How the department ensures course syllabi are aligned with the course outline of record.

2. Discuss the role of the advisory board and other industry bodies or input in updating curriculum to meet industry standards and the needs of students.

F. Community Engagement

1. If applicable, describe how your department staff members engage in institutional efforts such as committees and presentations, and departmental activities.

The ombuds office has presented at institutional flex days. The Ombuds Office has a seat on the Care and Prevention Team. This membership includes participating with the team as it presents at department meetings and professional development events. One of the Ombuds is also faculty leader for the Scholars Program and a member of the Senate's Professional Development committee. One the Ombuds is an active participant in the college's equity efforts, including leading an Equity Speaks event, and its Pathways effort. One of the Ombuds attends the monthly meeting of the Senate's Department Chairs committee. The Ombuds have served on hiring and evaluation committees both inside and outside their departments. And the Ombuds are active leaders in their respective departments.

2. If applicable, discuss the engagement of program members with the local community, industry, professional groups, etc.)

The Ombuds office believes its service would be better able to serve SMC if at least one of the Ombuds could attend an annual professional conference - either the California Caucus of University and College Ombuds Association conference or the International Ombudsman Association Annual Conference. Currently, the office lacks a budget for such an activity. As a result, the SMC Ombuds office has very little ability to interact with other professionals in the field.

3. Discuss the relationship among program faculty and staff, between program faculty, staff and

students, and the involvement of program faculty and staff with other programs or areas.

The Ombuds are in regular contact with faculty members and chairs when students who visit the Ombuds office ask us to communicate with those people for them. Students seeking help and support bring their concerns to the office. Sometimes faculty members call the office for help and support in dealing with a student-related issue. The office maintains confidentiality of student and faculty visitors until given permission to discuss their issues with the appropriate persons. The office seeks first to empower students with the tools and language to bring their concerns to their instructors. If students want the ombuds to intervene on their behalf, the ombuds will do so. The ombuds approach each situation as an informal and impartial mediator. The ombuds help each party see the others' perspectives and help the parties understand the rules and regulations that impact their actions. While the ombuds goal in each situation is a fair outcome for all involved, often that is not possible due to who holds power. In such cases, we make an extra effort to help visitors understand why things played out the way they did and we help them try to accept that a desired outcome may not be achievable.

The ombuds meet on a weekly basis to discuss and review cases. The ombuds collaborate on the writing of annual program review and the tabulation of the data regarding the types of concerns and issues that are brought to the office.

The Ombuds office presents about its service and the trends it observes to departments and to the Department Chairs committee.

G1: Current Planning and Recommendations

1. Identify any issues or needs impacting program effectiveness or efficiency for which institutional support or resources will be requested in the coming year. [This information will be reviewed and considered in institutional planning processes but does not supplant the need to request support or resources through established channels and processes].

The Ombuds office believes its service would be better able to serve SMC if at least one of the Ombuds could attend an annual professional conference - either the California Caucus of University and College Ombuds Association conference or the International Ombudsman Association Annual Conference. Currently, the office lacks a budget for such an activity. As a result, the SMC Ombuds office has very little ability to interact with other professionals in the field. The office also lacks a clear process for requesting such funds. The office is under Student Judicial Affairs in the SMC Organizational Chart and its office supplies are funded out of that office. The time that the Ombuds are assigned to the office is funded by Academic Affairs. It is not clear to us to whom we should make such a request for funds.

2. If applicable, list additional capital resources (facilities, technology, equipment) that are needed to support the program as it currently exists. [This information will be reviewed and considered in institutional planning processes but does not supplant the need to request resources through established channels and processes].

The office printer is old and is not functioning optimally. A printer is critical to carrying out

daily responsibilities.

The ombuds themselves paid for a new desk chair for the office.

The ombuds office, as initially determined in the planning process, was to be moved to the new student services building when it opens. But, through the process that unfolded, there is no longer space in the building for the office. We believe the best location for the Ombuds office, as it is a student service that gets many referrals from counselors, is in that building. Short of that, the office needs a new location that fits the needs of a confidential office that deals with sensitive situations. In our previous 6 year program review, the ombuds wrote, "It is hoped that when the new student services building is completed, and we are placed near Psychological Services, we will be able to have the secretarial support for making appointments and maintaining necessary confidentiality." Since then, we have developed an online appointment system that enables students to confidentially make appointments electronically.

3. If applicable, list additional human resources (staffing, professional development, staff training) needed to support the program as it currently exists. [This information will be reviewed and considered in institutional planning processes but does not supplant the need to request resources through established channels and processes].

Currently, the office is staffed by two faculty members for 18 hours per week during fall and spring, one for 12 hours and one for 6 hours, and typically for a total of about 30 hours in summer and winter. Currently, we believe we are not able to adequately serve online students. We believe that if we could staff 24 hours per week, 12 for each Ombuds, during the fall and spring we could better market to and serve online students.

4. List all current positions assigned to the program.

Two faculty members serve in the Ombuds office. During the fall, one serves in the office for 12 hours and the other for 6 hours. During the spring, the other serves in the office for 12 hours and the other for 6 hours. During the summer and winter, the ombuds typically split about 30 hours over the course of each session.

G2: Future Planning and Recommendations

1. Projecting toward the future, what trends could potentially impact the program? What changes does the program anticipate in 5 years; 10 years? Where does the program want to be? How is the program planning for these changes?

Electronic communication and remote communication continue to be increasingly important forms of communication for SMC's student population. This is the case in part because a large portion of SMC's students take classes online. But, even students taking classes on the physical campuses seem to desire the ability to communicate electronically and remotely due to their various school and employment schedules. This perceived trend has motivated the Ombuds office to consider how to effectively serve students in this way while working within the resource constraints (i.e. reassigned hours, technology) established by the college. Additionally,

the office needs to ensure it can meet this demand while maintaining independence, neutrality, confidentiality, and informality.

2. If applicable, list additional capital resources (facilities, technology, equipment) that will be needed to support proposed changes. [This information will be reviewed and considered in institutional planning processes but does not supplant the need to request resources through established channels and processes].

To meet the demand for more electronic and remote communications with students, the Ombuds office will need proper technology, e.g. computer with built-in camera and microphone. The office may also need access to appropriate communications platforms.

Additionally, the office will need a new printer to handle day-to-day functions.

3. If applicable, list additional human resources (staffing, professional development, staff training) that will be needed to support proposed changes. [This information will be reviewed and considered in institutional planning processes but does not supplant the need to request resources through established channels and processes].

If we are to serve online students and continue to serve all other students as we do, the office may need to be supported with additional hours. Currently, the faculty serving as ombuds divide 9 units of reassign time during the fall and spring semesters. Also, Academic Affairs typically pays for the ombuds office to be open roughly 30 hours during the winter session and 30 hours during the summer session. These hours are also divided among the ombuds. The current support enables the office to serve students mostly in an on ground format. Additional hours will allow service to more students and continued follow up with current case load.

4. If applicable, note particular challenges the program faces including those relating to categorical funding, budget, and staffing.

The ombuds office does not use categorical funding.

5. Summarize any conclusions and long term recommendations for the program resulting from the self evaluation process.

The Ombuds Office will be served well by thinking of itself as an administrative unit with unit objectives and outcomes. Instead of working to produce student learning outcomes, as it has been trying to do for years, it will redirect the focus on producing outcomes that can be used to evaluate how it is serving the institution. Seeking to answer such questions as whether it is increasing awareness of the service, does the service accommodate the majority of the student population, is it sharing trends and problems with the correct offices?

In the course of its work the office notes trends and problems, rather than individual issues. Currently, this information about trends and problems is conveyed in ad hoc and informal ways to areas the ombuds deem appropriate. The Ombuds Office believes a better approach would be to change where the office sits in the organization of the institution so that it can be more

consistent and impactful in the sharing of this information. Because the Ombuds Office fields visitors with concerns primarily related to areas that are part of Academic Affairs, the ombuds believe the office should report directly to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. It believes it should provide an annual report of trends and problems to that Vice President and the Vice President of Student Affairs. Each can then choose how and whether to act on such information.

Because the Ombuds office lacks a budget for conferences, the ombuds have little opportunity for professional development. As neither ombuds was academically or professionally trained to be ombuds, professional development opportunities are critical. Having a budget to enable at least one of the ombuds to attend at least one Ombuds conference per year would greatly serve both the Ombuds office and the institution.

6. Please use this field to share any information the program feels is not covered under any other questions.

The Santa Monica College Ombuds office has been serving students since 1976. The ombuds serving in the office are faculty members, and are part of the teaching faculty. As so many student concerns are related to grades, classroom management, and student teacher relations, we believe having teaching faculty members in the position is a great strength of the SMC ombuds office. Faculty members who hear from the ombuds can speak with a peer who understands their challenges and experiences. Students can speak to an ombuds who understands the context for their concerns. The ombuds can bring their teaching experience and expertise to bare in many of the situations that visitors bring. Fortunately, the ombuds can avoid any conflicts that may arise as a result of students expressing concerns about areas where one of the ombuds work when not working in the ombuds office because the ombuds office has multiple faculty members serving in the office. Each ombuds can recuse her/himself from handling complaints from their respective disciplines. At the same time, having very few people serving as ombuds, typically two, ensures consistency on cases, ongoing collaboration and consultations among the ombuds, and consistence of philosophy that guides how visitors' cases are handled.

The SMC Ombuds office is tasked with serving students and addressing student concerns. The office will consult with faculty regarding student and teaching concerns, it does not address faculty or staff complaints or challenges among those groups or within those groups. Though it works just on student-related concerns, the SMC Ombuds office sees at least an equivalent number of cases as seen by the ombuds offices in large universities like UCLA and University of Michigan.

The office serves students, and faculty members not by always solving their complaints, concerns, or problems, but by directing students to where they might go to address their concerns, and by giving students time to reflect and organize their thoughts. The office coaches students on how to effectively communicate with faculty members and other college staff. The office helps the faculty mostly by providing a buffer so faculty members do not have to deal directly with difficult student demands. Also, the ombuds are available to faculty members to answer their question about how best to manage a difficult situation with a student.

In the SMC organization chart, the Ombuds office is under Student Judicial Affairs, which also

pays for office supplies. However, Academic Affairs approves and funds the ombuds reassign time and the money paid for office hours in winter and summer. The ombuds office is rightly located and treated independently from those areas. Also, the office does not serve as an office of official complaint to the college. It directs individuals with such complaints to the appropriate location. In the course of its work the office notes trends and problems, rather than individual issues. Currently, this information about trends and problems is conveyed in ad hoc and informal ways to areas the ombuds deem appropriate. The Ombuds office believes a better approach would be to change where the office sits in the organization of the institution so that it can be more consistent and impactful in the sharing of this information. Because the Ombuds office fields visitors with concerns primarily related to areas that are part of Academic Affairs, the ombuds believe the office should report directly to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. It believes it should provide an annual report of trends and problems to that Vice President and the Vice President of Student Affairs. Each can then choose how and whether to act on such information.

H. Evaluation of Process

Please comment on the effectiveness of the Program Review process in focusing program planning.

Reflection over the last 6 years assist in program improvements. After our 6 year review, we were able to identify areas that need improvement as well as past accomplishments. For example, improving outreach was one area we identified in an annual program review and were able to take many steps to accomplish this goal. We continue to identify specific strategies that will assist us in improving campus wide access to the ombuds office as well as student awareness that will support student success throughout their time at SMC and beyond.

The development of future goals allows us to seek improvements in services provided attempting to reach more students and identify alternate modes of access, i.e., virtual meetings and conference calls for distance education students.

The ombuds office is committed to the SMC community and will support both students and faculty through difficult situations that can occur throughout each semester. As the college continues to serve a diverse population of both students and staff, we will also encounter a variety of communication styles, strategies, ideas and values. This can potentially lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings and misinterpretations. This reality will require us to continue to promote our services and assist in conflict management, clarity and reflection to all involved in the situation.

I. Executive Summary

Narrative

Program Evaluation

Commendations
Recommendations for Program Strengthening
Recommendations for Institutional Support