Respect and Treatment

“Respect and treatment” is reported as the first or second most frequent concern by all visitors, and all visitor types (faculty, manager and supervisors, staff, students, and trainees), matching the data from last year. While UCSF Gallup and faculty climate surveys generally show good levels of engagement and satisfaction, Ombuds Office visitors note a culture where disrespectful treatment is tolerated in their workplace. A commitment to leaders’ skills across the institution is the key to improvement in professional conduct, respect and treatment of individuals, and morale in teams, clinical practices, labs, and departments.

UCSF is justifiably proud of our leadership in areas of technical expertise, total research grants, international reputation, and other areas where success is quantifiable. Leaders can learn and develop skills to coach individuals and develop teams to engage respectfully while achieving the UCSF mission. Improving interpersonal and communication skills requires a clear organizational culture where leaders hold each other and their teams accountable for respectful behavior.

Research has identified that manager or leader behavior is the number one reason for high turnover, whether from one department or lab to another, or separation from the institution. When leaders model and insist on respectful behavior, there is a decrease in fear, abrasive behavior, turnover and number of discrimination complaints.

New Theme

An increase in the number and complexity of authorship disputes suggest a need for improved clarity regarding roles, expectations, and determination of attribution, with special focus on the Post-Doc/Principal Investigator relationship.

Additionally, we saw a 143% increase in the number of visitors reporting the risk of unwarranted staff attrition/transfer. This risk is costly and disruptive to the work.

Confidentiality

The Ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

Neutrality

The Ombuds, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombuds Office helps identify the perspectives and options of all parties, and does not take sides. The Ombuds Office is, however, an advocate for fair and equitable processes.

Informality

The Ombuds Office is an informal, off-the-record resource, and does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative proceedings. The Office has no decision-making authority and maintains no official records.

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Our Principles

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“Thank you very much for your insightful and helpful work on this. As always, you offer meaningful opportunities for staff support and growth. I greatly appreciate your support of this brilliant team.”

The Office of the Ombuds identifies the risks that visitors expressly state in their confidential meetings. In 2016–17, 43% of the 509 visitors identified at least one associated risk. Unresolved conflict creates both risk and cost.

**Risks**

- Loss of department productivity due to pervasive conflict: 133
- Potential for internal/external grievances: 86
- Unwarranted staff attrition/transfer: 68
- Litigation potential: 27
- Negative publicity: 23
- Significant violations of policy/Code of Conduct: 22
- High risk safety issue: 13

For additional information about how the Office of the Ombuds services are delivered, please visit our website at www.ombuds.ucsf.edu.