

Clemson University's Ombuds Office



A confidential, independent, neutral,
informal, and safe venue to discuss
concerns, conflicts, and challenges.

*A place to go when you don't know
where else to go.*

What is an Ombuds Office?

The Ombuds Office is a safe space for the Clemson University community to process concerns, get information, and develop options for how to move forward in a difficult situation. The University Ombuds can provide education, conflict coaching, mediation, facilitation, and referrals to other resources across Clemson.

Why have an Ombuds Office?

There are a lot of helpful resources at Clemson, and the Ombuds Office is a complement, not a replacement, to those. Here's what makes the Ombuds Office unique:

- **Neutrality:** The Ombuds Office acts as a third-party observer helping you gain a clear picture of your conflict or situation from multiple perspectives. We do not take sides in any situation, and we remain unaligned and impartial within the University.
- **Informality:** The Ombuds Office does not participate in any formal University proceeding or investigation. This is a low-risk place to go to consider multiple options for resolution and figure out your next steps.
- **Independence:** The Ombuds Office is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible. We function outside the normal chain of command, which allows us flexibility in how we operate and access in communicating depersonalized trends and recommendations to University leaders.
- **Confidentiality:** The Ombuds Office holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does not keep records or disclose confidential communications unless a visitor gives us permission to do so. The only exception to confidentiality is when there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

The above Standards of Practice are set forth by the International Ombuds Association (IOA).

More information can be found at
[*www.ombudsassociation.com*](http://www.ombudsassociation.com).





The Ombuds Can:

- Listen and serve as a confidential sounding board.
- Coach you through your conflict.
- Help you generate options and evaluate what option is best for your situation.
- Help you reframe your situation and see it from multiple perspectives.
- Refer you to resources across Clemson.
- Answer your questions about University policy, procedures, and formal channels.
- Educate you on conflict resolution, communication, restorative justice, and self-advocacy.
- Mediate conflicts.
- Facilitate difficult conversations.
- Offer training in conflict resolution and communication strategies.
- Identify systemic trends and report them to University leaders before they escalate.
- Recommend changes in policies and procedures to University leaders.

The Ombuds Cannot:

- Accept notice on behalf of the University.
- Advocate on behalf of anyone or on behalf of the University.
- Make binding decisions or change policies.
- Participate in any formal process, procedure, or investigation.
- Create records with identifiable information.

There is no limit to the issues you can bring to the Ombuds Office. If you would be better served by a different office or resource, we can make sure you have that information. If you are unsure how to move forward in any way, we'll help you work through it.



Ombuds Office

135 Old Greenville Hwy
Suite 203

Clemson, SC 29631

www.clemson.edu/ombuds



R. Gordon Halfacre, Ph.D., MLA*

University Ombuds for Faculty
and Students

Phone: 864-656-4353

Email: rhlfcr@clemson.edu



Tessa Byer, CO-OP®*

University Ombuds

Phone: (O) 864-656-5353

(M) 205-261-1787

Email: tbyer@clemson.edu

* Member of the International Ombuds Association

The Ombuds can meet you over the phone, via video chat, or in-person. Meetings can be scheduled at the Ombuds Office, where there is free parking, or at another location convenient to you. After-hours meetings are possible.