

UC Davis Ombuds Office:

Overview and Services

Jenny Vaccari, Associate Ombuds, Ombuds Office
Presentation for the New Chairs Workshop
Tuesday, September 15, 2026

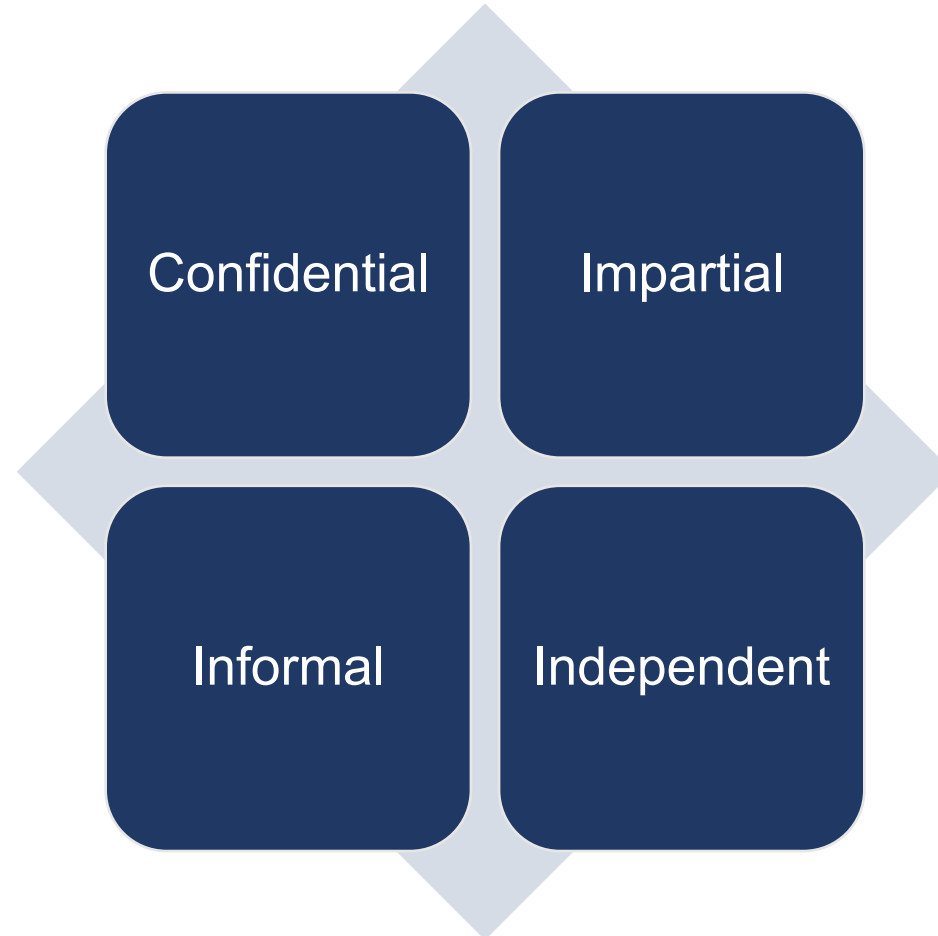
When you think of conflict,
what comes to your mind?

Ombuds Office

Overview and Mission Statement

The Ombuds Office is an **informal and confidential resource** designed to help members of the UC Davis, UC Davis Health (UCDH), and UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) communities successfully navigate conflict and difficult situations. Our mission is to provide a place for all members of the UC Davis, UCDH, and UC ANR communities to **discover pathways for conflict management and problem solving** in support of fair and collaborative professional and academic experiences in a changing world.

Ombuds Office Standards of Practice



International Ombuds Association. (2022). *Standards of practice*. https://ioa.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/SOP-COE/IOA_Standards_of_Practice_English.pdf

Ombuds Services



Confidential Sessions



Workshops & Presentations



Asynchronous Learning Materials



Systemic & Trend Feedback

The Ombuds Office Can Help Individuals and Departments:

- Sort through and untangle problems
- Generate options to effectively address issues
- Weigh risks, rewards, costs, and benefits of different directions
- Gain a new, neutral perspective
- Learn about possible campus resources and policies and procedures

Common Concerns

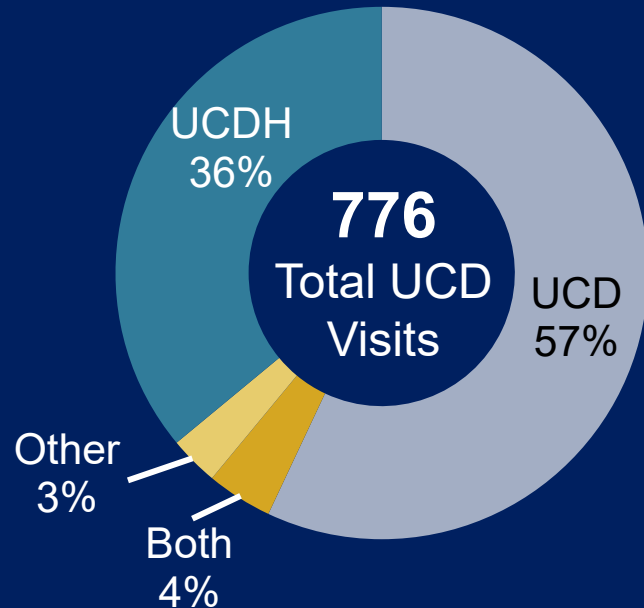
- Concerns about behavior or incidents involving colleagues, students, staff or others
- Departmental fractures or concerns around climate and culture
- Breakdowns in communication or disengagement
- Service or teaching assignments
- Space/ location disputes
- Conflicts that emerge in merit and promotion processes
- Research issues and collaborations
- Different approaches or concerns that emerge in hiring processes
- Concerns around fairness, possible discrimination, harassment, or abusive conduct*

* The Ombuds Office does not receive official reports. It is an off-the-record resource to discuss these types of issues and can suggest where you could report them if you choose.

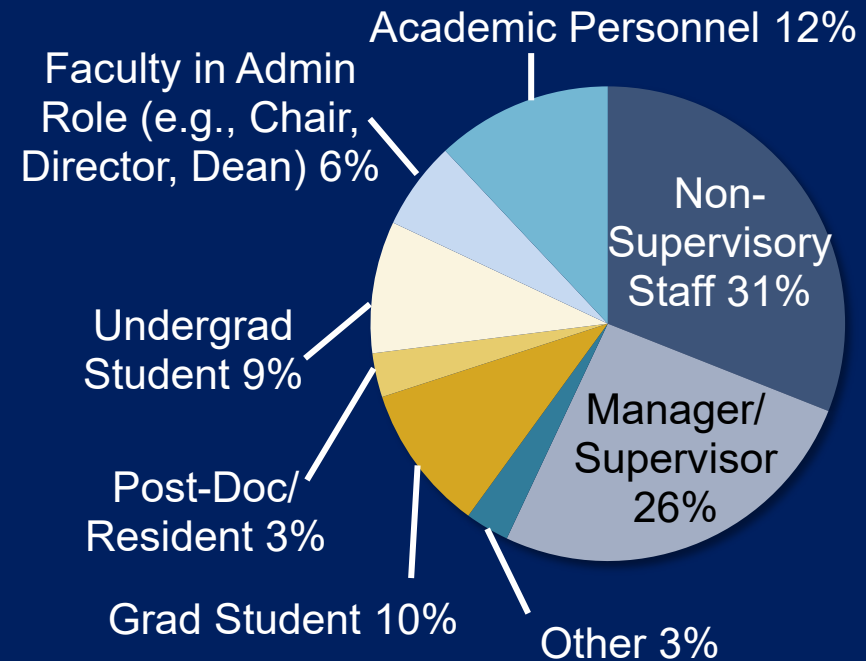
Ombuds Mediation and Group Services

- Typically, people benefit from individual sessions whether or not a mediation ever occurs.
- Confidential services start with individual meetings.
- When appropriate, we can discuss options such as mediation and group work and it's important to emphasize the benefit of individual sessions.
- Different processes may be suitable for different situations. The Ombuds will offer the processes that are most likely to be effective for the particular situation. If you want others to engage with Ombuds services, please start by contacting the office and scheduling an appointment for yourself. Offering the Ombuds Office is most effective if you make it clear that it is a voluntary resource that always starts with confidential individual sessions.
- Individual sessions, mediations, and group work are always voluntary – from start to end.

Visits by Campus



Visitor Status



The Ombuds Office handled 610 new visits, 164 repeat visits, 31 additional ANR visits, and 2 distinct mediations, totaling 807 visits. This included 12 group conflicts. Individual visits are scheduled for 90 minutes and mediations for 3 hours.

Ombuds Conflict Competence Workshops (2026-27)

Conflict Competence for Managers and Supervisors

August 13 & 20

Learn to manage conflicts and navigate interpersonal dynamics as a team leader.

From Bystander to Upstander

September 16

Learn strategies to support colleagues and address micro- or macro-aggressions in the workplace.

Conflict Competence Skills for Electronic Communication

September 24

Learn communication tools to contribute to positive working relationships through electronic channels.

Conflict Competence for Staff

October 13

Learn to prevent and resolve conflicts with colleagues and managers, including communicating your needs and lowering others' defenses.

Conflict Competence in Uncertain Times

October 21

Learn the positive impacts of integrating genuine appreciation in the workplace.

Getting to the Root of Group Conflict

October 29

Learn to lower defensiveness around tense topics, overcome listening barriers, and restore communication.

Creative Problem Solving in the Workplace

November 4

Learn to generate solutions that meet your needs in complex situations.

Constructive Feedback for Positive Change

November 19

Learn to employ different types of feedback, craft effective feedback, identify feedback triggers, and receive feedback skillfully.

The Power of Appreciation

December 3

Learn the positive impacts of integrating genuine appreciation in the workplace.

Listening to be Heard

December 15

Learn to lower defensiveness around tense topics, overcome listening barriers, and restore communication.

For more information, visit <https://ombuds.ucdavis.edu/events>

”Conflict competence is the ability to develop and use ***cognitive, emotional, and behavioral*** skills that **enhance productive outcomes of conflict** while reducing the likelihood of escalation or harm. The results of conflict competence include improved quality of relationships, creative solutions, and lasting agreements for addressing challenges and opportunities in the future. As with all competencies, ***people can learn ways to improve, change, and develop.***”

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

Leaders play important roles in managing decision-making processes and achieving successful outcomes, including fostering understanding, trust, respect, cohesion and high-quality, sustainable decisions. The following guidelines aim to help leaders approach decision-making in ways that prevent and manage conflict effectively. To implement these ideas with your particular group, consider consulting with the Ombuds Office.

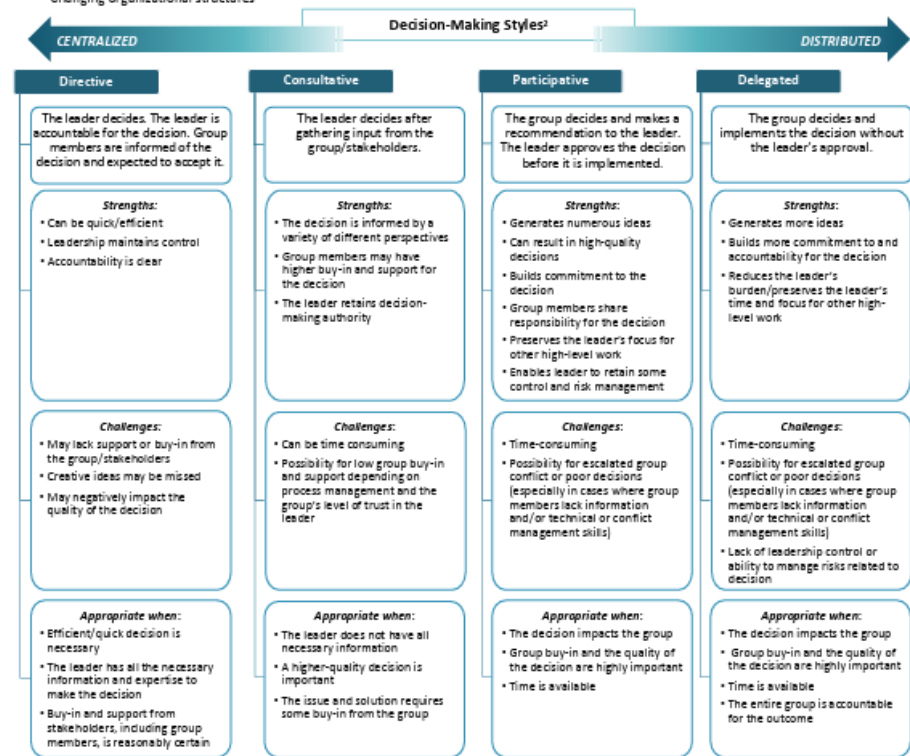
Identify the Central Issue

Clearly identify the issue that needs to be addressed and decided upon, breaking down complex issues into smaller, more manageable decision points. Here are some common workplace issues:

- Development of new programs, projects, courses, or services;
- Changing business processes;
- Changing organizational structures

Select an Appropriate Decision-Making Process

Select the decision-making process that best addresses the factors in each specific situation, considering the broad styles described in the model below. When identifying whether to use a more centralized or distributed decision-making process, consider situational factors such as *available time, issue importance, and stakeholder support*. More distributed or collaborative processes can be effective whenever a decision requires commitment or buy-in from group members and time allows for such a process.



1



Ombuds Office Tip Sheets

- [Decision Making Guide](#)
- [Developing Group Conflict Guidelines](#)
- [Facilitating Difficult Group Conversations](#)
- [Considerations for Accountability Discussions](#)
- [Communicating During Difficult Times](#)

See additional tip sheets at
<https://ombuds.ucdavis.edu/tips-and-tools>

Ombuds Office

Come with a Problem.
Leave with a Plan.

To schedule an appointment, call:
(530) 754-7233 or (916) 734-1600

Appointments offered by
Zoom, phone, and in person

Scan to sign up
for Ombuds Office
newsletter



For additional information, please visit our website: ombuds.ucdavis.edu

ombuds@ucdavis.edu

A note about email: To protect confidentiality, the Ombuds does not keep records. The best way to schedule is by phone, but if you choose to email we do not retain the email or respond to content.