



Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty

Newsletter
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Our logo is a Triskelion design from the late Bronze Age. A lively symbol, it gives a distinct impression of movement, always ongoing, fully connected, expressing continuity and balance.

Ombudsperson

Jean Civikly-Powell

Assoc. Ombudsperson

Carolina Yahne

Graduate Assistant

Yea-Wen Chen

Location

1800 Las Lomas NE
MSC 05 3140

Phone: 277-3212

Fax: 277-3399

jcivikly@unm.edu
www.unm.edu/~facdr

We have a choice about how we behave, and that means we have the choice to opt for civility and grace.

-- Dwight Currie

Changes Are Here!

The Faculty Dispute Resolution program has served UNM faculty since 1999. A review of UNM's peer institutions and other higher education institutions shows a predominance of "Ombuds" offices with services similar to those of FDR. A recent report from the NM State Risk Management Division praised UNM for its statewide leadership in alternative dispute resolution. The Division recognized the UNM programs for faculty and staff for "contributing toward cost savings for both the university and the state."

UNM Provost Suzanne Ortega recently announced a name change for FDR: Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty, with Jean Civikly-Powell as Faculty Ombudsperson. Carolina Yahne will be joining the faculty Ombuds office to assist with program operations. She is a New Mexico licensed psychologist with expertise in Motivational Interviewing, and has previously served in a temporary position at FDR.

VP for Human Resources Helen Gonzales announced a name change for the Staff Dispute Resolution Department: Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Staff, with Jonathan Armendariz as Staff Ombudsperson. The programs are housed at the southeast corner of Las Lomas and Buena Vista and while merged, will focus on their respective UNM populations.

UNM's ombuds programs continue to focus on one overarching goal: **a campus culture that resolves conflicts constructively at the least adversarial level.** These are name changes, not changes in function or substance. The ombudsperson is a designated neutral/impartial dispute resolution practitioner who provides confidential informal conflict resolution. The ombuds does not advocate for either side in a dispute and does not have decision-making authority. The office operates independently from the university's administration and from existing formal grievance procedures.

In its role as independent, neutral, and confidential, the office provides assurance to faculty of their widest and most open opportunity to take on the resolution of their issues. While the name changes are welcome, the programs for faculty and staff remain a good fit with the International Ombudsman Association's code of ethics and standards of practice.

The faculty program will continue to offer mediation training and workshops. And, the Ombuds programs' services continue to be free of charge to UNM faculty.

A concluding aside: While the acronym for the re-named office is rather awkward, a retired UNM faculty member has conjured up the following: ORDER UP!: Ombuds, Resolution of Disputes, and Educational Resources for University Personnel.

Spring 2010 Workshop

A Lively Brown Bag Lunch Panel!

****Special Invitation to VPs, Assoc. Provosts, and College/Dept. Leaders****

"How UNM Leaders Use Their Mediation Skills"

Panelists: Steven Block, Janet Cramer, Anne Simpson, John Trotter, Amy Wohlert, Steven Yourstone

Date/Time: Wednesday, March 31st, 12:00 - 1:00pm

Place: Dane Smith Hall, Room 126

UNM leaders will discuss challenges, lessons learned, and ways in which training in mediation is evident in their day-to-day UNM work. Please register with Jean Civikly-Powell at jcivikly@unm.edu or 277-3212.

The Somebody Mystique

In his book titled *Somebodies and Nobodies: Overcoming the Abuse of Rank* (2003), Robert Fuller argues that, compared with sexism and racism, “rankism underlies *all* forms of discrimination, and is more deeply entrenched” (p. 62). Rank-based discrimination is built of “bricks” and held together by “mortar” in supporting the abuses of rank. The bricks are the laws and politics that form the building blocks and the mortar is the mindset that holds them all together. By analogy to Betty Friedan’s coinage of the “feminine mystique,” Fuller calls the abuses of rank the “somebody mystique.” Fuller dismantles the “somebody mystique” with a preview of what will be involved in overcoming the abuse of rank.

“Recognition is not about whether we *are* a somebody or a nobody, but rather whether we feel we’re *taken for* a somebody or a nobody” (Fuller, 2003, p. 50).

Why We Put Up with Abuses of Power

Fuller synthesizes several reasons for the existence and the persistence of the phenomenon of rank abuse. First, rank is linked to power and power protects those who hold it through using that authority to fend off would-be challenges. Second, rank-holders can extend their influence illegitimately to domains over which they have no right to rule, and high rank inhibits protests and perpetrators. Third, we ironically tolerate the abuses of rank partly because we covet the rewards, perks, and protections that come to the somebodies of the world.

The Genesis of the Somebody Mystique

So, how does the somebody mystique work its magic? How are we so vulnerable to it? Fuller argues that the somebody mystique is grounded in the awe and admiration that we naturally feel toward those who have *earned* high rank, particularly high rank that is excellence-based. Once we experience this, something mysterious happens – our focus shifts from the accomplishment to the person. Then, fame itself becomes our focus, more than the person who possesses it. This phenomenon is called “transference” by psychiatrists or named “the spell cast by persons” by anthropologist Ernest Becker.

Deconstructing the Somebody Mystique

Even though we take assurance and comfort in the idea that “somebody knows,” Fuller argues that “excessive fascination with somebodies can interfere with our own mature pursuit of due recognition” (p. 77). Thus, Fuller seeks to deconstruct the somebody mystique by creating a new understanding of somebodies.

The Inside Story of the Somebody

Fuller posits that a realistic understanding of the inside story of geniuses, celebrities, the famous, and the successful is far more useful than glowing accounts that make them godlike figures. As far as geniuses like Albert Einstein are concerned, Fuller contends that “Breakthroughs in science and in art are almost always a consequence of someone being in the right place at the right time, asking the right question, and then having the right skills to answer it” (p. 80). “Genius,” Fuller argues, is the result of accumulation and collaboration. With regard to celebrities, they transfix us because they provide a constant reminder of the differences between the somebody and the nobody that coexist *within* everyone. In terms of famous people, the somebody mystique lifts up ordinary people far above the crowd and offers a false lifetime guarantee that never again will they want for recognition.

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The Inside Story of the Somebody

However, the bottom line is “the kind of recognition we need is like the kind of food we need: not just plates of caviar or hot fudge sundaes, but a balanced diet” (p. 86). With respect to the successful, we often overlook the fact that success results from tenacious persistence guided by the feedback of our failures or errors.

The first step out of Nobodyland, argues Fuller, is to embrace our secret dreams. When we realize that we have been overlooking something of significance and value right within us, we begin to act on it and stop feeling like nobodies. We become somebodies again. As Fuller insightfully phrases it, “In making our way out of Nobodyland, mistakes and failures are road signs, not traffic tickets” (p. 92).

Postscript: Robert Fuller, Ph.D. 1961, Physics, Princeton University; Past-President, Oberlin College. His sequel book is *All Rise: Somebodies, Nobodies, and the Politics of Dignity*, 2006

References

- Fuller, R. W. (2003). The somebody mystique. In R. W. Fuller, *Somebodies and nobodies: Overcoming the abuse of rank* (pp. 61-75). Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Fuller, R. W. (2003). Deconstructing the somebody mystique. In R. W. Fuller, *Somebodies and nobodies: Overcoming the abuse of rank* (pp. 77-92). Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.

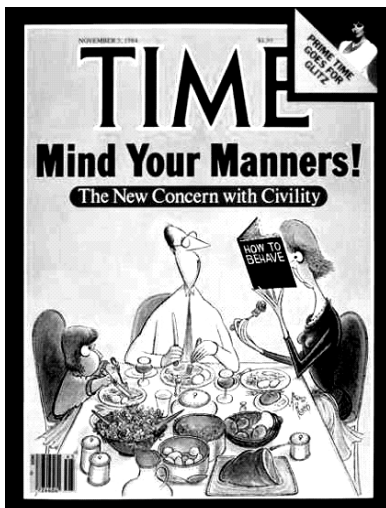
(Summary prepared by Yea-Wen Chen, Graduate Assistant)

Want to learn more about Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty?

Please visit us at: www.unm.edu/~facdr

Our website provides information on resolving workplace conflicts and moving forward to productive interactions. The website offers extensive information about the following topics:

- Department Chair Resources (Link to Online Resources for Department Chairs from *American Council on Education*)
 - How Mediation Works
 - Dispute Resolution Links
 - Archives of FDR Newsletters
 - Workshops and Mediation Training
- and more . . .



Sample Article Summaries

Our website offers over 25 article summaries on topics related to mediation and workplace conflicts. Here are several titles:

- Workplace Bullying: Causes, Consequences, and Interventions
- Balancing Career and Self: Maintaining Health, Humor, and Sanity in the Academy
- Can We Agree to Disagree? Faculty-Faculty Conflict
- When Colleagues Are Brats (Full Article)
- Search Beneath the Surface for Hidden Meaning
- Sustaining and Nurturing Hope in a Mediation Process
- And Never the Twain Shall Meet: Administrator-Faculty Conflict

Eight Rules for a Civil Life

Forni, P. M. (2008). Preventing rudeness: Eight rules for a civil life. In P. M. Forni, *The civility solution: What to do when people are rude* (pp. 28-51). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Forni (2008) contends that being considerate and kind is the wisest way to deal with ill-treatment from others. Forni argues that, when we are civil, other people — even though they will not always be civil in return — at least will be more inclined to be so. Forni believes that living a civil life will do marvels for each person as well as prevent much rudeness. Specifically, Forni consolidates and advocates eight rules for leading a civil life.

#1 Slow down and be present in your life: As much as multitasking has become a way of life, Forni reminds us of the often underappreciated value of choosing to slow down and be present. As we slow down, our levels of stress go down, which will enable us to value others more and to behave more considerately. As Daniel Goleman puts it, “When fully present, we are more attuned to those around us and to the needs of the situation, and we fluidly adapt to what is needed.” Also, slowing down to the present moment enables us not only to find meaning and gratification but also to do justice to both time and people.

#2 Listen to the voice of empathy: Forni believes that “Being aware of others is where civility begins” (p. 34). Forni argues that while we may be hardwired to experience empathy, we often neglect to make listening to its voice a serious priority. When we do not listen to or act upon the voice of empathy, we diminish our humanity and miss precious opportunities to relate and connect. After all, showing empathy toward total strangers not only makes us feel better about ourselves but also encourages us to be better persons.

#3 Keep a positive attitude: Forni insightfully points out that the way we *think* our way through life ends up *being* our life. Forni argues that “Whether positive or negative, attitude is destiny” (p. 35). At the individual level, a positive attitude can make us cheerful, attentive, and helpful and may help even fend off illness. At the relational level, positivity makes better relationships and better relationships in turn reinforce positivity. Forni encourages us to “Always find a nugget of opportunity in the rubble of adversity” (p. 35).

#4 Respect others and grant them plenty of validation: For Forni, to mature means “to gain a heartfelt understanding that others have value and are entitled to respect and consideration” (p. 36). Forni encourages us to find ways to show people that we value spending time with them however fleeting it may be. Validating others will bring us closer to them. Also, we all crave validation in its innumerable forms: respect, approval, praise, consideration, fairness, appreciation, encouragement, understanding, kindness, etc. So, as a matter of course, grant validation with generosity and sincerity.

#5 Disagree graciously and refrain from arguing: “Rudeness is the ugly face that disagreement shows when it’s mismanaged” (Forni, 2008, p. 38). Overall, Forni advocates for the ability to disagree only when necessary. Also, he suggests making disagreement a matter of personal belief or preference, not one of uncompromising right or wrong. Some useful and polite formulas include “I wish I was as certain as you,” “Maybe there is a different way of looking at it,” “I regret I can’t agree,” and “I agree with your premise, but I arrive at different conclusions.”

#6 Get to know the people around you: Forni argues that familiarity can lead to care, affection, and love, because we tend to behave better with people we know or with whom we have even a loose connection. Forni believes that by getting to know those around us, we expand the group of people we treat particularly well and who treat us accordingly.

#7 Pay attention to the small things: Forni advocates that “Paying attention to the little things helps us show respect, establish rapport, and cement relationships” (p. 42). Believe it or not, sometimes a small detail

#8 Ask, don’t tell: Forni encourages us to exploit the remarkable power of *asking*. “Asking is always validating” (p. 43) whereas telling can be interpreted as bossy, dismissive, and patronizing.

In sum, Forni stresses that following those eight rules for living a civil life will make each of us a more likable person. That likability will improve the quality of our lives such as enjoying a strong platform of social support and being more productive at work. We simply can’t help liking the likable person who treats us with civility, validation, and kindness.

“To mature is to gain a heartfelt understanding that others have value and are entitled to respect and consideration.”
(Forni, 2008, p. 36)