

RESOLUTION S23-003: Call for a University-wide Ombuds Office
Passed by GPSS April 6th, 2023
Passed by GSA April 12th, 2023

Sponsors:

John T. Gonzalez (GSA, Steering Committee, Experimental Pathology Representative)
Carl Rice (GSA, History Representative 2021-2022)
Sara Siwiecki (GPSS, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair, Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry Representative)
Grace Lan (GSA, Steering Committee, Political Science Representative)
Isabelle M. Aboaf (GSA, Political Science Representative)
Thomas Munro (GSA, Classics Representative)
Chrisan Fernando (GPSS, Vice President; GSA, Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry Representative)
Brandon Greenblatt (GPSS, Jackson School Representative)

Recipients:

Peter Salovey, President of Yale University
Scott Strobel, Provost of Yale University
Kimberly Goff-Crews, Secretary & Vice President for University Life at Yale University
Lynn Cooley, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Yale University
Tamar Szabó Gendler, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Yale University
Yale Corporation Board of Trustees

Whereas multiple administrations of Yale University representative body leadership – Graduate Student Assembly (GSA), Graduate & Professional Student Senate (GPSS) and Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), and School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) Senate (FAS-SEAS-S) – have, as advocates for the needs within their respective university communities, been calling for a university-wide Ombuds Office.^{1,2,3,4,5}

Whereas Students, faculty, and alumni individually and in community are calling for the establishment of a university-wide Ombuds Office.^{6, 7, 8}

¹ Yale Daily News statements from GSA Chair from [2018- Wendy Xiao](#) and [2019- Lucylle Armentano](#)

² “SCHWARTZ: For an ombudsman”. 2013. [Yale Daily News](#)

³ “Unlike most Ivies, Yale lacks ombudsman”. 2013. [Yale Daily News](#)

⁴ “FAS Senate discusses creation of Ombuds Office”. 2019. [Yale Daily News](#)

⁵ [GPSS Strategic Plan 2022](#)

⁶ LETTERS 3.26. 2023. Jim Hostetler '95. [The Yale Daily News](#)

⁷ Faculty continue to advocate for Yale ombudsperson. 2023. [The Yale Daily News](#)

⁸ [GSA Department Report of Grad Student Town Hall: Political Science](#). Mar 27, 2023

Whereas recommendations and proposals from Yale University’s Advisory Committee on Campus Climate (2011)⁹, the FAS-SEAS-S (2019)¹⁰, and the GSA (2018)¹¹ reflect unwavering support in response to a decade of sustained need.¹⁻¹²

Whereas calls for an Ombuds Office have continued after the establishment, restructure, and expansion of The Sexual Harassment and Assault Response & Education (SHARE) Center; the establishment of which was intended to address the perceived, albeit reductive, services an Ombudsperson provides.^{2, 3, 9}

Whereas the independent, impartial, and informal nature of an Ombuds Office separates it from formal grievance procedures and, as such, this office falls outside the purview of a union contract.¹³

Whereas Yale University has, through its commitments, recognized that aspects not addressed in the 2011 Report on Campus Climate burden the scholarship, community, and inclusivity of our campus.^{9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20} Moreover, Yale’s current confidential support offices do not explicitly address non-sexual harassment workplace mediation; and none of the resources available can be independent and impartial due to their responsibilities to the institution.

Whereas Yale University administrators have communicated reservations around compliance and mandatory reporting regarding establishing an Ombuds Office, a common concern across universities.^{21, 22} However, peer universities have successfully developed alternate, informal

⁹ [“Report to the President and Fellows of Yale University of the Advisory Committee on Campus Climate”](#). September 15, 2011

¹⁰ [“Recommendation to the President and Provost by the FAS Senate Peer Advisory Committee: Creation of a University Ombuds Office at Yale”](#). April 30, 2019

¹¹ [“Graduate Student Assembly Proposal for the Establishment of a Yale University Ombuds Office”](#). Summer 2018

¹² [Yale faculty seek ombudsman to bring neutral party to university issues](#). *New Haven Register*. Sep. 22, 2019

¹³ Union contracts at our sister institutions with Ombuds Offices such as [Brown](#) and [Harvard](#) do not delineate the unofficial/impartial grievance support an Ombuds Office provides.

¹⁴ UP CLOSE | ‘Why bother?’: A look at University resources for addressing discrimination and harassment. 2021. [The Yale Daily News](#)

¹⁵ “A Lasting History: Yale confronts racism in past and present”. 2022. [Yale Daily News](#)

¹⁶ “It’s terrifying’: Students say racism runs rampant at School of Nursing”. 2020. [Yale Daily News](#)

¹⁷ Survey reveals strong feelings of exclusion among marginalized groups in Yale’s math department. 2022. [Yale Daily News](#)

¹⁸ Two years after Salovey establishes DEI plans, students question staying power of Belonging at Yale Initiative. 2023. [Yale Daily News](#)

¹⁹ Students and alumni sue Yale, alleging discrimination against students with mental illnesses. 2022. [The Yale Daily News](#)

²⁰ [President’s Response to the Report of the Advisory Committee on Campus Climate](#). Richard C. Levin. Office of the President. November 10th 2011

²¹ [Out from the Shadows: Title IX, University Ombuds, and the Reporting of Campus Sexual Misconduct](#). 2016. *Denver Law Review*

²² [The Evolving Role of the “Ombuds” in American Higher Education](#). C.L. Claussen. 2013. *Survival of the Fittest*

avenues for grievance resolution while respecting legal reporting requirements²³, as has Yale University (i.e., SHARE Center's support of the Title IX Office)⁹.

Whereas all Ivy Plus Schools, except Yale, have at least one university-wide ombudsperson, and many have additional school, discipline, and/or student-postdoctoral specific positions which add value to their campus climate health^{3, 10, 24, 25,26}

Whereas Yale has committed to promoting a welcoming and equitable climate on campus through the "Belonging at Yale" initiative and has repeatedly acknowledged the value of an ombuds office by citing the former Ombuds Office at the Yale School of Medicine as a resource for promoting diversity and equal opportunity.^{27, 28, 29}

Whereas the failure to replace Merle Waxman, the ombudsperson for the Yale School of Medicine, the only ombuds-like position at Yale University, signals an institutional culture of apathy towards the spirit of third-party arbitration.

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted weaknesses in, and confusion over, worker protection for academics (reflected in growing graduate student dissatisfaction over covert work conditions), emphasizing the need for such an office.³⁰

Whereas a plurality of the sponsors of this resolution are privy to unreported incidents within Yale University that would have benefited from access to an independent, impartial, confidential, and informal Ombuds.

Be it resolved, the representative bodies passing this resolution jointly urge the President, the Provost, the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the Yale Corporation Board of Trustees to create, as quickly as possible, a University Ombuds Office for Yale to serve the University's faculty, students, and staff.

Be it further resolved, our representative bodies regard the responsibilities and support offered by SHARE and an Ombuds Office to complement, rather than conflict with, each other.

²³ Ombuds communications from [Harvard](#), [Brown](#), and [University of Kansas](#).

²⁴ Including Dartmouth, which has just reinstated their ombuds office after a 4-year hiatus. "Tracey Brant Named College Ombudsperson" 2022. [Dartmouth Article](#)

²⁵ Self-reporting data from IOA Ombuds suggests Ombuds are identifying novel issues for their institutions, tackling interpersonal conflicts and, increasing attention to diversity/equity/inclusion/belonging amongst other benefits. [2022 IOA Practice Survey Report, p. 17](#)

²⁶ The Ombuds Office at Syracuse has identified issues with leadership communications, leadership perceptions and sources of discrimination. [2020-21 Syracuse University Ombuds Annual Report](#)

²⁷ ["Belonging at Yale. Promoting Diversity and Equal Opportunity at Yale University"](#), 2019-2020

²⁸ ["Promoting Diversity and Equal Opportunity at Yale University"](#) 2016-2017.

²⁹ ["About Belonging at Yale"](#)

³⁰ BBS Caucus GSA Representative [letter to BBS Leadership](#) in response to student complaints in 4th-year Responsible Conduct of Research.

Be it further resolved, our representative bodies maintain an Ombuds Office would play a crucial role in supporting our constituents navigate Yale’s dissociated structure, addressing “confusion created by the variety of resources, processes, and procedures” rather than interfering with efforts to “simplify and streamline.”²⁰

Be it further resolved, to ensure an effective and empowered Ombuds Office, the relationship between the University and said Ombuds Office should be established through an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, to be made publicly available, that complies with all International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice.³¹

Be it further resolved, the ombudsperson and associate ombudspersons should be granted complete and unencumbered authority and institutional autonomy to support the Yale community, recommend remedies, and publish their reports on visible and public platforms. The university should encourage a good-faith relationship within its offices and departments.³²

Be it further resolved, our representative bodies request that the resulting Ombuds Office publish at least a yearly report to promote transparency with the community at large and run an anonymous mistreatment reporting website akin to that of Johns Hopkins.³³

Be it further resolved, our representative bodies request that the appropriate administrators initiate and publicize the search by the end of the current fiscal cycle.

³¹ [IOA STANDARDS OF PRACTICE](#)

³² “PILLAI: Yale’s long wait for an ombudsperson”. [Yale Daily News](#)

³³ Mistreatment Incident and Learning Environment Surveillance [Committee Form to Report Student Mistreatment](#). The Office of the Ombuds. Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine