

Laurie Patterson, Ombuds, Akron General Health System
Personal Statement

I accepted my colleagues' bid for nomination, hoping to give back to this organization that has given me so much. The IOA has afforded collegueship and mentoring from the best in the field—people whose understanding legitimizes and validates my work and sustains me in my solitary role.

I have been a full-time Ombuds since 2005 when I implemented a new program for healthcare employees. A conflict resolution practitioner since 1989, my experience includes training, facilitating, mediating domestically and internationally, building coalitions, and re-building relationships between people and across cultural, racial, economic, regional and professional divides. I received a Master's Degree from Ohio University and currently teach the Healthcare Conflict Resolution and Collaboration Specialization at the Werner Institute for Negotiation and Dispute Resolution.

Questions for Nominee

1. Why are you interested in serving on the IOA board?

Discussed in longer fashion in my Personal Statement, my reasons for wanting to serve on the IOA Board are several. I wish to see this organization thrive, so I am willing to serve it in any capacity that the membership allows and supports. I appreciate the teaching I have received informally and formally. I have grown as an Ombuds because of the collegueship afforded me by the annual conferences and subsequent connections to other members. As a speaker about my program in healthcare, I have received encouragement and validation from IOA members—this kind of regard sustains me, and I am grateful. Simply, I wish to give back to an organization that has given me so much.

2. Do you have any previous leadership or volunteer experience in TOA/UCOA/IOA or in other organizations?

For the last two years, I have served the Journal of the IOA, this year as an associate editor.

3. Do you have an area of expertise that IOA could possibly utilize - such as finance and accounting, grant writing, etc.?

I do not have finance, accounting or grant writing expertise. I have, like many of my IOA colleagues, expertise in conflict resolution training and, having been an inaugural Ombuds in a health care setting, I have lots to share about implementing new programs.

4. What IOA activities or areas are you most interested in committing time toward?

Annual Conference Planning, Membership, and Professional Development.

5. Describe how you would advance IOA's Strategic Plan.

I know that many of my gifted colleagues have and are currently contributing in great ways. My particular skills and experience prepare me to assist with relationship building, both among the entire body of the IOA and between IOA and other organizations that could benefit from an ombuds program but need assistance in implementation or in understanding our value. In order to enhance the Association's strength, I would like to support the following initiatives from the Strategic Plan: encourage member engagement, further develop a mentoring program, devote time to the online resource to disseminate best practices, and to support professional development by ensuring that staff development content meets participants' needs. I would offer the support of greater communication through dialogue circles, regionally or by sector, in order for people to feel heard and understood by each other. I admit a bias here as I focus on internal matters: it is my inclination to focus first on how we are with each other before the focus on how we are with others outside our group. Basic as that sounds and I present this with all due respect - I fear we often miss many voices and along with those, wonderful ideas, keen perspectives, and rich opportunities for growth.

6. Describe an issue impacting the profession that you are most passionate about and the actions you would take have taken related to this issue.

From my perspective, a very pressing issue for the profession is lack of understanding of the ombuds role and the value it brings. Think of how many times, at a party or neighborhood gathering, you have been asked your occupation and knew that your answer could not be short, knew you would now have to give at least both your title and a definition if not some general examples of how you serve your organization. Because we're interested in our work and devoted to it, most of us probably don't dread having to answer that question, but we are reminded that we remain a bit obscure. We have work to do to support our professional reputation and to further define ourselves.

This is one of the reasons I have served the IOA Journal for two years.

I believe this publication brings and will continue to bring scholarship that explains, legitimizes, and validates the contributions of ombuds to all organizations. In my health care organization, scholarship holds high esteem, and the IOA Journal has been read and well received. Our scholarship and our professional self-reflection are respected by other professionals. Reputation as the experts on the ombuds field and being the best at our practice are values that also lead me to wish to support our professional development courses to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the membership, both new and experienced, and that we are noticing and responding to trends in the field so

that we may promote the implementation of more ombuds programs in more organization.