

**Nick Diehl, Associate Ombudsman, National Institutes of Health  
Personal Statement**

I am honored to be nominated for the IOA Board of Directors and I'm excited about the potential of serving on the Board. I am an ombudsman at the National Institutes of Health and co-chair the IOA Communications Committee, co-edit *The Independent Voice* newsletter, and serve on the Outreach Task Force. I have also developed and taught IOA courses and participated in numerous conference sessions. I was briefly on the IOA Board until joining NIH – IOA bylaws did not allow more than one Board member from any one organization.

I am dedicated to the mission of the IOA and hope that through my service on the Board I can support individual practitioners' professional development and help IOA to increase awareness and legitimacy of the field through external partnerships.

**Questions for Nominee**

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

In reflecting on my ongoing development as an Ombudsman, it is clear to me that IOA plays a key role in providing opportunities for professional development through courses, conferences and, possibly more crucially, a supportive network of IOA members. As a Board member, I would work to maintain a focus on helping individual practitioners (i.e. through training courses, strong conferences, mentoring, communication tools for members, etc.) as well as supporting efforts to raise awareness of the field with other professional organizations and the general public through partnerships, media relations, proactive communications to organizations considering establishing ombudsman, and other endeavors.

These goals are not easy to achieve, and are all the more challenging within an organization that relies on the dedication of volunteers who have many other commitments. However, I hope to have the opportunity to contribute my efforts and energy to IOA through Board service and I look forward to working with other volunteers to strengthen the organization.

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

I have volunteered extensively for IOA including the following:

- Co-chair of the Communications Committee
- Co-editor of *The Independent Voice* newsletter
- Member of the Marketing/Outreach Taskforce
- Served on the Board in 2007 until taking a new position with the NIH (bylaws prohibited more than one person from any organization serving on the Board)

- Developed the Ombudsman Master Class session pre-conference training (Montreal, 2009); taught Understanding Conflict: A Socio-Psychological Perspective for Ombuds (Washington, 2008); and participated in a number of other IOA Conference sessions and panels
- Facilitated the IOA in-person Board retreats in 2006 and 2007

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

Corporate communications: Before I started work in the ombudsman field, I spent about ten years working in corporate communications. I have used the skills I developed in that area to support the efforts of the Communications Committee. I hope to continue to provide strategic consultation to IOA in developing marketing, outreach and media relations efforts.

Facilitation: I have experience developing and facilitating group processes and have worked directly with the IOA Board to facilitate two annual Board retreats. I look forward to serving in this role again, when appropriate.

Organization Development: I am currently in an organization development graduate program at American University (AU/NTL). I anticipate using my new skills to support IOA in its strategic planning process.

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

I am especially interested in contributing to professional development and outreach to and partnerships with other organizations.

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

The IOA Strategic Plan is a very thorough document that identifies both the strengths of the organization and important areas for development. I believe that it clearly identifies some of the steps that IOA will need to take to reach its goals of further supporting practitioners and the field.

As a Board member I would suggest three ways by which to advance the Strategic Plan. First, I would help the Board to develop a process to identify the goals in the Plan that are of top priority (with periodic revisions, when necessary). The process would involve an assessment of the potential impact of an initiative, feasibility and interdependencies with other priorities. The reality is that with the relatively small size of IOA and its available resources, we do not have the capacity to pursue all projects at the same time.

Second, I would ask all Committees to regularly review the elements of the Strategic Plan which relate to their work to ensure that committee efforts are supporting IOA's larger strategy. I know that the Board has done this in the past and I think that continuing that intentional alignment is important.

Third, I would like to see the Strategic Planning Committee continue to build on its accomplishments by making recommendations to the Board to ensure that IOA's direction is taking into account changing economic and workplace environments.

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.

There are several "fractures" that concern me in the ombudsman field and IOA in particular. One critical division that must be addressed is that between practitioners whose offices do or don't adhere to IOA Standards of Practice. I feel strongly that standards are an important foundation for the organizational ombudsman field and I value them in my own work. Yet, I recognize that there are similar types of practices that provide value to organizations and do not conform to IOA standards.

IOA is at its root an organizational ombudsman association but the reality, resulting in dissonance, is that a significant portion of its members are not able to practice according to the IOA standards. I don't see any easy resolution to this problem, but one I can imagine is IOA eventually being an umbrella organization that recognizes and supports organizational ombudsman practitioners and other types of practices that do not adhere to IOA standards.

While becoming an umbrella organization is one possible solution I think this is a fundamental topic for exploration and that we should develop a participatory process for people who would be interested in identifying ways in which the dissonance can be resolved. An effective and transparent process would need to include opportunities for broad participation, concrete goals and transparent decision-making methods. It would also require a significant investment of members' time, effort, creativity and patience for such an endeavor to be successful.

If the divisive tensions that currently exist in IOA go unresolved I am afraid we will diminish the opportunity for the field to flourish and relinquish the potential strengths of a well functioning organization.