

# THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

News from the International Ombudsman Association

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

# Looking Ahead: Challenges and Changes

BY GARY YAMASHITA, IOA PRESIDENT



When I joined The Ombudsman Association 12 years ago, I never imagined I would one day be a part of something called the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and

that we would come so far so quickly. IOA has been in existence since July 2005 and in that time we have made great strides.

This past April, we successfully completed our first international joint conference in Montreal. The terrific event helped us learn more about what it requires to become a truly international organization. We recognized the critical importance of real-time language translation, the fact that many U.S. ombudsmen are prohibited from attending conferences in other countries — either by their organization's rules or economic constraints, and the need to team up with international partners in order to ensure the success of the event. We hope to use these lessons

learned in the planning of future international conferences.

This coming year will also bring many new changes and challenges. IOA is about to launch a certification program which, in my opinion, will be a major step in developing our identity as organizational ombudsmen and defining our profession. There have been numerous discussions on this subject. Please be assured that your Certification Task Force and the IOA Board have made every effort to carefully examine all of the pros and cons of launching a certification program.

Because of our growth, we are finding it more difficult to manage our organization with only a volunteer Board and a management company. Consequently, we are exploring the idea of hiring an Executive Director or Manager to assist us with the administration of the IOA.

The IOA Board will be finalizing our Strategic Plan this August in a face-

to-face meeting in Houston. We are looking forward to providing you with an update after the completion of the meeting.

In spite of the difficult economic times, IOA has carefully managed our resources and we are in a sound fiscal position to carry out our near- and long-term plans.

If you have an interest in actively participating in IOA, I invite you to contact a Board member to express your interest. The more involved you are, the more IOA will become *your* organization.

Finally, I want to thank the Board and our members for putting your trust in me for the coming year. I cannot promise success in everything I do, but I promise that I will do my best to meet the needs of the IOA. ●



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# IOA Board Update

**BY TOM KOSAKOWSKI, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES**

In an effort to increase transparency and accountability, and keep members informed about developments within IOA, the Board of Directors has launched a new effort to provide a report on its activities in each issue of the *Independent Voice*. Following are updates on several current projects and issues.

## ELECTION RESULTS

In March 2009, IOA members elected **Don Noack** of Sandia National Laboratories, **Isabel Calderon** of Mars, Inc., and **Doris Campos-Infantino** of the Inter-American Development Bank to three-year terms on the IOA Board of Directors. The online balloting also returned to the Board **Judy Bruner** of the University of California-San Diego, **Kevin Jessar** of the American Red Cross, and **Patti Lynch** of United Technologies Corp. **John Carter** of The Citadel was elected to a two-year term as the Associate Member Representative.

At the first meeting of the new Board in April, the following officers were selected:

**President: Gary Yamashita**, Chevron Corp.

**Vice President: Jennifer Wolf**, University of California, Irvine

**Treasurer: Wayne Blair**, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

**Assistant Treasurer: Janet Morse**, University of Minnesota

**Secretary: Tom Kosakowski**, University of California, Los Angeles

In related news, **Margo Wesley** announced that she would leave the Board upon her retirement from the University of California Berkeley in July 2009.

## CERTIFICATION

The Board has approved the governance documents for the new certification program. Additional details on certification may be found in a separate article on page 12.

## BOARD RETREAT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

In August 2009, the Board will convene for a two-day meeting in Houston, hosted by President **Gary Yamashita** at Chevron. The agenda will include discussions on the long-term goals for IOA and will be facilitated by an external consultant. The outcome of the summer meeting will be discussed in the next issue of the *Independent Voice*.

## PUBLISHING BOARD MINUTES

Several IOA members have requested that Board Minutes be made available. In an effort to further promote IOA's values of good communication and transparency, the Board voted to post minutes in the Members Only section of the IOA website, beginning with minutes from the May 2009 meeting.

## MEMBER QUERIES

In the weeks following the IOA annual conference in April, discussions on the IOA listserv have identified several important topical issues. Specifically, members have sought input on how to best survey visitors, the issues around

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*(Board Update  
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selecting an interim ombudsman, and whether to respond to the closure of ombudsman offices. The Board has developed an informal policy of referring *ad hoc* issues like these to the relevant IOA committee for a response. The assigned committee may also offer policy recommendations to the Board. When appropriate, IOA may sponsor an open conference call for interested members. In late June, for instance, IOA convened a call for members to discuss the office closure issue.

### OUTREACH TO NEW OFFICES

The Board has adopted a new practice of responding to organizations that are considering an ombudsman program. A Board member (usually the Secretary) will contact the organization's representative and offer a package of materials that includes a resource list, sample ombudsman job descriptions for the various sectors, and the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. So far, the Board has contacted two organizations. Members with suggestions for how to improve our outreach efforts should contact the Board of Directors with their ideas.



## Depression and Burnout in the “Caring” Professions: *Non-medicinal Remedies for Self-care*

BY MIM GAETANO, MARS, INC.

There is evidence to suggest that practitioners, such as ombudsmen, who deal with conflict and/or caring for people can be more susceptible to depression and burnout than individuals in other fields. The neutrality that defines our role requires us to tamp down our own personal value sets and maintain a neutral approach to conflicts, even though we may violently disagree with the parties' approaches or decisions. The confidentiality that we provide to our clients also may challenge us by resulting in a sense of isolation. If ombudsmen do not have colleagues or workmates with whom they can vent, share stories or ask questions, we may begin to feel alone and unsupported. Taken together, these and other aspects of our jobs may create conditions for poor mood, anxieties and possibly depression. To prevent or ease these difficult feelings, this article offers some non-medicinal remedies for the self-care that we, as ombudsmen, should hold as a priority.

(Before beginning any kind of program, check with your doctor as symptoms of depression are similar to symptoms of other illnesses and may benefit from medical or pharmacologic treatment. If you find the suggestions in this article do not alleviate your symptoms of depression or burnout, it is an indicator that you should contact your medical and/or behavioral health provider for further assistance.)

### WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

How do we know we are experiencing depression and not just feeling down or having lower self-esteem? According to the World Health Organisation:

“Depression is a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration. These problems can become chronic or recurrent and lead to substantial impairments in an individual's ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities.”<sup>1</sup>

If depression is “common,” that means the chance of any of us being directly or indirectly impacted by depression is quite high.

### WHAT IS BURNOUT?

The Annual Review of Psychology<sup>2</sup> explains burnout this way:

“Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.”

There are overlaps and links between depression and burnout. While burnout is related to cynicism, depression is linked to a “loss of interest or pleasure.”

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**(Depression and Burnout continued from page 3)**

Similarly, “exhaustion” can be compared to “low energy,” and “inefficacy” is a more succinct way of describing “substantial impairments in an individual’s ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities.” It soon becomes clear that these definitions pose a chicken or the egg question: Do we burn out because we are depressed, or do we get depressed because we are burnt out? Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to this question, as there are myriad factors and inputs that contribute to why people burn out or suffer depression.

However, some research has shown that emotional exhaustion is the hallmark of burnout. So, as ombudsmen who spend a great deal of our time dealing with other people’s emotions, and perhaps ignoring our own, it not difficult to see how we may become emotionally exhausted and thus be candidates for burnout. There is a belief that “individuals in the caring profession are experts at one-way caring.”<sup>3</sup> However, if helpers hope to function effectively in a professional role, it is essential that they learn and practice the art of self care.

## NON-MEDICINAL TREATMENTS FOR DEPRESSION

### Gardening

Some research shows that there is a chemical reason why digging around outside in a garden may give us a boost.

A research project conducted at Bristol and University College London (UCL) linked exposure to the microbes found in dirt with good mental, as well as physical, health. Interest in the project arose after human cancer patients being treated with *M. vaccae* (a bacteria commonly found in dirt and soil) unexpectedly reported increases in their quality of life. The suggestion was that the microbe indirectly activated the brain cells that produce serotonin, a similar outcome to taking a common anti-depressant medication.

Exposure to sunlight is another benefit of gardening. Sunlight — or the lack thereof — is key to the form of depression known Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. The symptoms of SAD, which are similar to those of depression, are worse during the fall and winter when there are fewer hours of daylight. SAD symptoms are believed to be related to the brain’s levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter, and the hormone melatonin, which is important in the regulation of the body’s circadian

rhythm or “internal clock.” These chemicals may be thrown out of balance during times of diminished hours of sunlight (they also play a role in jet lag). Spending more time outside during the day and phototherapy (light treatment) can get one’s system back in check and result in better moods.

Finally, for many people there is something rejuvenating and therapeutic about being out in the garden watering, weeding or just putting around. Is it the fresh air and sunshine? Is it the exercise? Is it the sense of nurturing or seeing a seed or seedling that you planted blossom into a flower or vegetable? Perhaps it is all of that, and more.

### Exercise

If we were looking for a low-cost, non-invasive and safe treatment for depression, it would be hard to bypass the simple daily walk. Exercise, an effective but underused treatment for mild to moderate depression, can:

- Increase self-esteem
- Provide a distraction from your worries
- Improve your health and fitness level, which can lift your mood
- Offer a way to channel built-up stress and frustration
- Improve sleep, which can suffer in those who feel depressed
- Release endorphins (the body’s natural “high” chemicals) that result in heightened moods.

### Pet Therapy

Animals have long been recognized as being a positive force in the healing process. The friendly presence of dogs, for instance, can help individuals cope with emotional issues related to illness, and the physical contact with another living creature may help divert a person’s attention from pressing daily problems. Owning a pet may confer a sense of responsibility, as it is the human’s job to care for the animals, as well as give them attention and love. What better way to encourage a depressed person to get out of bed in the morning?

Attempts to measure and quantify the benefits of animal assisted therapy with hard scientific evidence are ongoing, but if depression is linked to feelings of loneliness and isolation, the touch, cuddles and responsibility that come with an animal companion may be powerful medicine.

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*(Depression and Burnout continued from page 4)*

## Diet

There is growing interest in the possible role played by diet and, in particular, by the low levels of dietary omega-3 fatty acids, in the increasing rates of depression in Western societies in recent decades. Omega-3 fatty acids play a critical role in the development and function of the central nervous system, as well as neurotransmission and receptor function. These essential fatty acids are highly concentrated in the brain and appear to be particularly important for cognitive (brain memory and performance) and behavioral function.<sup>4</sup>

The Western diet has changed considerably over the past 150 years, with omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids from fish, wild game and plants being replaced by saturated fats from domestic animals and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids from common vegetable oils. These changes have led to a more than ten-fold increase in the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids in the Western diet. It is commonly accepted that these changes are linked to increases in cardiovascular disease, depression and other neurological disorders. Indeed, several studies support a connection between dietary fish/seafood consumption and a lower prevalence of depression. In one study from New Zealand, researchers found that fish consumption is significantly associated with higher self-reported mental health status. However, it is important to note that scientists have not found a causal connection between dietary fish and lower levels of depression.<sup>5</sup>

## Journaling

Keeping a journal may help alleviate some feelings of isolation and anxiety because it can:

- Be the friend that you can talk to when you want to. Reflecting on your feelings in your journal may promote the sense of sharing your experiences.
- Be a safe place to release pent-up thoughts and feelings. Rather than bottle these up inside, writing about them in your journal can help you release them and move forward.
- Make you stop and take a good look at yourself. Addressing an overly pessimistic attitude or other negative thought processes may be part of the work of emerging from depression.
- Provide a sacred space to “be.” A journal doesn’t necessarily have to be filled with your written thoughts. You can use your journal to express yourself with drawings, collages, or other forms of expression.

## Slow Down

Many people are finding it increasingly difficult to “switch off” once they leave work. Having mobile phones and email devices means we can now be contacted virtually anywhere in the world. The addiction to BlackBerry smart phones in the United States has conjured up a new term, “CrackBerry,” an allusion to the highly addictive drug. Taking our difficult work home with us, even figuratively, can reduce our chances of finding the time to relax.

## A Higher Being

Research into the use of meditation and the role of spirituality in treating depression has shown some interesting results. In one Canadian study, researchers found that frequent attendees of organized religious services showed fewer severe depressive symptoms, reported a higher satisfaction with life, and exhibited lower rates of current and lifetime alcohol abuse when compared with individuals with less frequent or no worship attendance. It’s not who or what you worship that provides the benefit but more so that you are:

- Spending regular time in the company of other people
- Taking regular “time out” from your hectic life to reflect and slow down
- Making an attempt through faith to understand and cope with whatever is happening in your life.

## Conclusion

One of the non-medicinal remedies, which is not listed here, is probably the hardest for most of us to do: Talk about it. Perhaps this article will prompt us to consider our own emotional states and whether we are engaging in enough self-care. We owe it not only to ourselves, but to our clients as well. ●

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### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/management/depression/definition/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/)

<sup>2</sup> Maslach C., Schaufeli W., Leiter M., Job Burnout, Annual Review of Psychology, Vol. 52: Feb. 2001, pp. 397 - 422

<sup>3</sup> Corey, Marianne Schneider and Gerald Corey. Becoming a Helper. 2007. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, p. 5

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/omega-3-000316.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=533861>

# An **IDEA** Whose Time Has Come

BY MAURICIO (REESE) RAMOS, SANDIA NATIONAL LABORATORIES

**I**ssues and Interests  
**D**iscussion and Dialogue  
**E**xploration and Evaluation  
**A**greement and Action

There is a process, for which I use the acronym "IDEA," that serves me well as an ombudsman. It lays out a roadmap of phases that can help us navigate people through where they are in conflict to where they could be in resolution.

I have created the "**The Parable of Alice**" to illustrate the process. Imagine Alice (yes, the one from Wonderland) at the edge of a dark forest. She does not really want to enter the forest because it seems scary, but she has a problem. She has heard that there is some sort of Sage on the other side of the forest that might be able to help her. You see, she had accidentally stumbled upon Humpty Dumpty, the large egg who was sitting on a wall, and gave him a great big push, which he thinks was intentional. He then had a great fall. He was broken and threatened to call the King and all his men to his aid. Alice, though, had already had a run-in with the Queen of Hearts, who threatened to cut off her head. Needless to say, Alice wanted to make sure the King and Queen did not get involved in her Humpty situation. So, mustering up the courage to proceed, she picked up all 16 pieces of Humpty and began her journey.

creatures there talking over each other about what they each needed, desired or wanted. Alice and Humpty began contemplating whether anyone here could point them to the Sage. Then, a large Caterpillar appeared and simply asked them, "What do you each want?" Alice and Humpty each told him what they saw as the problem. The Caterpillar asked Alice and Humpty to contemplate several questions: What is not working? What is working? What do I really need? What am I feeling? Would proving this person (or egg, in this case) wrong make them want to help me? Is there a misperception or misinterpretation of some sort? Do I have all the information I need? What is this conflict costing me? Alice was beginning to like the Caterpillar a lot because he seemed to truly understand her; Humpty was thinking the exact same thing. As a matter of fact, Humpty felt so good that some of his shell was piecing itself back together. "What do I do now and which way to the Sage?," they asked the Caterpillar. He told them to go to the next village.

**D**rained and hungry, Alice, still carrying Humpty, walked until she reached the Village of **DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE**. There she and

**I**n due time, Alice came upon a village with a big sign at the entrance that read, "Village of **ISSUES AND INTERESTS**." She and Humpty noticed strange

Humpty found a table with tea and biscuits where all sorts of creatures were sitting opposite each other. These creatures seemed focused on conversing and dialoguing with each other. Alice was about to sit when a man who called himself the Mad Hatter began asking Alice and Humpty questions. Unlike the Caterpillar, the Mad Hatter seemed to care less about each of them individually and more concerned that Alice and Humpty understand each other. He asked them, "Can you share with each other why this situation is not working for you? Do you both feel that you are communicating such that it empowers this relationship? Have you sought to understand first and then sought to be understood? What does the other really value? What commonalities do you have? What will it cost you if this matter does not get resolved?" As they answered these questions, Alice and Humpty began to see that even though they still had differences, a common purpose (to put Humpty back together again and avoid the involvement of the King and Queen) emerged between them. "What do we do now, and which way to the Sage?," Alice and Humpty asked in unison. "Go to the next village," advised the Mad Hatter.

**E**ntering the forest again, Alice and Humpty, now with his legs back and only in two pieces, walked side by side until they found the Village of **EXPLORATION AND EVALUATION**. What made this village curious was that all the creatures were sitting

*(continued on page 7)*

*(IDEA continued from page 6)*

down, cross-legged, with their eyes closed in what appeared to be deep concentration. Alice and Humpty noticed that images would suddenly appear above the creatures as if whatever they were imagining would instantly manifest over their heads. Since Alice and Humpty could not get anyone's attention they continued walking until they reached a huge oak tree where a Cheshire Cat began asking questions that made both Alice and Humpty sit in wonderment. The cat asked, "What if things could be made better? What would that look like? What would be the optimal solution to this problem? Can you create at least three possibilities? What are the specific consequences for each of the options identified? Which options seems to meet your needs the most? What are the upsides of each option? What are the downsides? What can you do to mitigate the downsides? What if this does not work? What else could work?" Both Alice and Humpty (who was now in one piece but still had cracks) began feeling hopeful. They saw that the image each had created was the same. "We have chosen a solution. Can you tell us where the Sage is to make this a reality?," Alice and Humpty asked in harmony. "Go to the final village," the Cheshire Cat said with a grin.

**A**lice and Humpty arrived at the Village of **AGREEMENT AND ACTION**. All the creatures there seemed very content and were shaking hands; some even had shed tears of joy. Alice and Humpty noticed that a White Rabbit ap-

peared to be waiting for them. He said, "Listen, there is no time to waste. You have momentum here. Use these moments of decisive action to create in reality what you have envisioned." He continued by asking: "What are you each committed to changing? What is the other willing to do? Is the agreement we have chosen SMART (specific, measureable, action-oriented, realistic, and timely)? Has accountability been built in? What do you each need to do for the other?" Alice and Humpty knew that, in the end, they held the key to resolving their problem. They had begun their journey thinking they would come across a Sage who would fix the problem, but they themselves knew what needed to be done. So they turned toward each other, exchanged apologies, made commitments and in an instant felt better.

Will **IDEA** (Issues and Interests, Discussion and Dialogue, Exploration and Evaluation, Agreement and Action) work each and every time? It depends — on the parties, the problem, and even the facilitator. Some people will get stuck in one phase (or "village") while others will not even venture into the initial phases. Still others will step into the dark, scary woods, with an Ombudsman facilitating the way, to identify their issues and interests, discuss and have a dialogue with each other, explore and evaluate possible solutions, and, if they choose, craft an agreement they can both accept. At that point, they will find themselves emerging on the other side of a not-so-dark-forest. ●



## Education

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[www.ombudsassociation.org/](http://www.ombudsassociation.org/)

## When Supervisors Refer Employees for Mediation, or “Can You Take This Mess Off My Hands?”

BY TOM SEBOK AND LISA NEALE, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

Picture this: a supervisor calls you and says two of his employees are involved in a conflict and he'd like to let them try to work it out in mediation in the Ombudsman's Office. As the discussion progresses, you learn that the supervisor believes one of the parties (Employee A) is far more responsible for the conflict than the other (Employee B). He further thinks Employee A violated his expectations of appropriate workplace behavior. In addition, the supervisor reveals that he has not addressed this with Employee A – but has told Employee B that's how he sees it!

Campus supervisors who responded to a recent University of Colorado at Boulder survey said their most frequent and difficult conflict-related challenges involve conflicts between the employees they supervise. It is understandable that they request our help as ombudsmen in managing conflicts in peer relationships. While some have tried to help their employees, and others have done little or even made matters worse, most hope mediation will provide an answer to a problem they typically view as beyond their capacity to resolve. And, indeed, mediation can sometimes be very helpful in these circumstances. But, upon receiving requests for mediation – especially from supervisors – it has become our

practice to agree to *consider* mediation as one option, but not immediately agree to mediate.

Instead, we have found it useful to first talk with supervisors about a number of issues they may not have anticipated discussing when they contacted the Ombudsman's Office. When we receive third-party referrals from anyone, including supervisors who ask us to mediate between their

employee if they choose not to mediate or work with the Ombudsman's Office. We also try to separate the supervisor's interest in managing or resolving the problem from their stated position that mediation is the way it must be achieved. Most supervisors are receptive to this information, but those who insist that mediation must occur – even involuntarily – can be referred to other mediators outside of our organization.

When evaluating the appropriateness of requests from supervisors for mediation involving two supervisees, we believe it is critical to understand how the supervisor views the situation and the

**[U]pon receiving requests for mediation — especially from supervisors — it has become our practice to agree to *consider* mediation as one option, but not immediately agree to mediate.**

employees, we ask the person making the referral to give our contact information to the parties and tell them they can contact us if they'd like our help. While mediators routinely assess whether a situation may be mediable, we must also follow IOA Standard of Practice 4.4, which requires ombudsmen to work only with parties who use our services voluntarily. Thus, before we meet with the employees referred by a supervisor, we tell the supervisor of the voluntariness of mediation and explain that employees may feel reluctant to tell their supervisors that they decline mediation. We ask supervisors to agree to not take punitive action against either

role she or he has played in its existence or perpetuation. Sometimes, our discussion with supervisors has led to the conclusion that mediation is a viable option for the employees. But, all too often, supervisors fail to understand the dynamics of a conflict, often overlook opportunities to contain it, and sometimes inadvertently inflame it. They often seem to hope that mediation will magically provide a remedy. Though not a magic wand, we have found it helpful to pose the following questions to supervisors who come to us requesting mediation:

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**(Mediation continued from page 8)**

1. What is the conflict between these employees about?
2. What have you tried to do to help them resolve their differences?
3. How would you assess the percentage of responsibility each employee has for this conflict (e.g., 50-50, 90-10)?
4. What have you told these employees about how you have assessed their individual responsibility for the conflict?
5. Do the employees seem to see their responsibilities the same way you do?
6. Have either of these employees violated your expectations of appropriate workplace behavior while engaging in this conflict and, if so, what did you do about it?
7. (If applicable) Does the offending employee agree that her or his conduct has been inappropriate?
8. In your view, are these employees willing and able to: a) listen and understand the other person's

perspective and b) consider changing some of their own behaviors if doing so would make a lasting difference in their working relationship?

9. If these employees found alternative methods to manage or resolve their conflict – without using mediation or the Ombudsman's Office – would that be acceptable to you?
10. What likely options do you see for managing this situation if mediation doesn't happen or doesn't work?

These questions offer a roadmap to help supervisors navigate through some of the challenges that accompany the task of managing employees and workplace conflict. Determining how much the supervisor knows about the conflict presents a useful starting point and also reveals information about how she or he has dealt – or not dealt – with the

dispute. If it appears the supervisor knows little about what is really happening, has failed to communicate these perceptions, or failed to set appropriate limits, we have found it helpful to delay mediation until the supervisor has first addressed these issues. We have also found that, for many supervisors, just raising these questions can provide us with a rich opportunity to utilize conflict coaching to explore the obligations that accompany a management role and to identify supervisors' goals and options within a safe environment. Finally, discussing a few of these questions often naturally surfaces many of the other questions. This discussion can assist the supervisor in finding ways to approach immediate employee conflicts as well as effectively assess and manage future conflicts — with or without the Office of the Ombudsman or the use of mediation. ●

## ROVING REPORTERS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 4TH ANNUAL IOA CONFERENCE

### “Evolution of the Ombudsman [1809-2009]: Rich History, A Promising Future”

From April 15 – 18, 2009, Montreal, Canada, served as the host city for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual IOA Conference. The joint conference was held in conjunction with The Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO) and The Forum of Canadian Ombudsman (FCO). The event featured five pre-conference workshops, three keynote speakers, three general presentations, and nearly 30 concurrent sessions. **John Carter** helped the *Independent Voice* recruit “roving reporter” volunteers from among the attendees to provide summaries of many of these sessions. Their contributions share highlights of the conference with those unable to attend, as well as provide an opportunity for reflection for conference participants. Much gratitude is expressed to the “roving reporters” for their contributions. You can read the summaries in the Newsletter section of the IOA Website, <http://www.ombudsassociation.org>.



# IOA's New Mentoring Program: A Proven Success

BY VICKY BROWN, UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, NICK DIEHL, NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH AND TATIA GRANGER, THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

At the end of the first year of IOA's Mentoring Program, all participating mentors and mentees were asked to complete a survey to gauge the program's effectiveness. The responses were overwhelmingly positive from all respondents indicating that the program was valuable for both mentors and mentees. Some of the responses clearly reflected how both the mentors and mentees grew, personally and professionally, from the experience. One mentoring pair, mentor **Nick Diehl** from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., and mentee **Tatia Granger** from The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va., agreed to share their thoughts about the mentoring program. Tatia became the ombudsman at William & Mary in 2008; Nick has been an ombudsman since 2004.

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## Q: How did you decide to participate in the mentoring program?

**TATIA:** I was new to the field and felt like the mentoring program would help me better understand, as well as provide, the services of the profession. I had just attended the IOA 2007 Annual Meeting in Boston and felt somewhat overwhelmed by the possibilities of the role — there was so much to do and I wanted to do everything at once. I really wanted to put myself in the best position to be an effective resource for my institution's workforce and the professionals at the meeting seemed so willing to help. I felt like a formalized program would be tremendously valuable — and I was correct, thankfully!

Another reason that I was drawn to the program was that the position at my institution was new and a solo-staffed unit so I felt that the mentoring program would be a way to avoid the possibility of isolation that comes with being a one-person office. Again, I was fortunate that the program created an instant colleague for me, albeit at a distance.

**NICK:** I knew that in the past the University and College Ombudsmen Association (UCOA) had a very successful mentoring program, so as soon as I heard that a group within IOA was going to do the same, I decided to volunteer.

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## Q: What have been the benefits to you of participating in the mentoring program?

**TATIA:** The primary benefit has been feeling connected to the profession through colleagues and not just the practice of the work. Nick has recommended resources, including other professionals, which have served me well in this role.

**NICK:** First, I have really enjoyed working with and getting to know Tatia. We were lucky enough to have an opportunity to meet in person last summer at an IOA training session in Washington, D.C., so that was a nice way to start our collaboration. Apart from getting to know a colleague, I think it is helpful for practitioners to have the opportunity to talk about cases on a regular basis.

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## Q: What were the most common topics you discussed when you spoke?

**TATIA:** In the beginning we talked about getting my office set up and some suggestions on how to reach out to the campus community. Later, I would call to get some insight and sometimes a "second opinion" about situations, resource materials and strategies.

**NICK:** Since Tatia has just started the Staff Ombudsperson program, we discussed many questions in relation to establishing the office as a presence on campus and also how to manage individual cases, as Tatia was beginning to work on how she would engage with staff members on campus in a variety of contexts.

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## Q: How did you decide when you would have mentoring sessions?

**TATIA:** We either called or emailed to set up a mutually workable time, but our discussions were always by phone. Of course, we would be limited in what we discussed by email but speaking by phone, at least for me, reaffirmed the relationship over time.

**NICK:** We were fairly informal in how we scheduled our conversations. For the most part we would check in periodically unless there were pressing issues that needed to be discussed immediately.

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## Q: What were the challenges you faced in making the mentoring relationship productive and successful?

*(continued on page 11)*

*(Mentoring continued from page 10)*

**The immediate connection to another person who understands what it is you are charged with doing is amazingly supportive. — Tatia Granger**

**TATIA:** I guess there were several circumstances that could have posed challenges, but I don't feel that we had any to circumvent the start to our relationship. As an example, currently Nick and I work in different sectors but he had an academic background that matched William & Mary very well. Also, we hadn't met in person when we were assigned but were able to meet in person rather soon after so we were able to spend our earliest conversations just getting to know about each other. And finally, as one might imagine, our schedules were not always in sync so finding time to connect was challenging but not at all impossible. I think we both just made the effort to make it work.

**NICK:** I don't think there were big challenges in this regard. With Tatia's rich background in academic administration and her knowledge of the culture of William & Mary, we were able to brainstorm ways for Tatia to engage in a way that would be effective within the context of her organization and its culture.

**Q: Do you anticipate that you will continue to correspond in the future?**

**TATIA:** Definitely! I find Nick to be an invaluable part of my professional development. I appreciate his counsel on so many levels and look forward to continuing to work with him.

**NICK:** Absolutely. It has been fun to work together and I anticipate we will continue to be in touch.

**Q: Do you have any suggestions for people who might consider participating in the mentoring program?**

**TATIA:** I would especially encourage new ombudsmen to take advantage of the program. Also, for those individuals who are the sole resource in their organization, I believe the immediate connection to another person who understands what it is you are charged with doing is amazingly supportive. And for the professionals with experience, your insight is important to newcomers in terms of proliferating professionals according to the tenets of this very meaningful work.

For me, I had twenty years of experience in higher education, but none as an ombudsman. In my effort to do the best possible job, I wanted to hear from an experienced ombudsman — but not just at annual meetings. While some of the work may seem intuitive, each visitor brings her or his own set of circumstances. It really helps everyone involved when you have experienced professionals to count among

your resources. I now understand how valuable the ongoing contact among ombudsman professionals is to the stability of the profession.

**NICK:** I think that the mentoring task force sets the foundation for a good experience by being thoughtful in who is paired together. In our case, my background as an ombudsman at Princeton University was very helpful in understanding the dynamics of Tatia's academic environment. As with any collaboration, I would advise people participating in the mentoring program to have a conversation early in the process regarding what they hope to achieve and the expectations of how and when each person will communicate with the other. ●

Ombudsmen are extremely busy carrying out their job responsibilities and meeting their professional goals. But mentoring someone new to the profession offers the unique opportunity to reaffirm the core values of the IOA and share experiences and lessons learned in the process. To learn more about the IOA's Mentoring Program please go to <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/membership/membersignup.pdf>.

If you have any questions, please contact Vicky Brown  
**vbrown@mail.ucf.edu,**

Mary Chavez-Rudolph  
**Mary.ChavezRudolph@udenver.edu,**  
or Claudia D'Albini  
**dalbinic@email.arizona.edu**

**Apart from getting to know a colleague, I think it is helpful for practitioners to have the opportunity to talk about cases on a regular basis. — Nick Diehl**

## Thank You Certification Volunteers!

**BY JENNIFER WOLF, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE**

The Certification Task Force wishes to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of the volunteers who have assisted in the various stages of the certification program to date.

In April 2008 and October 2008, 14 volunteers participated in the Job Analysis Process, in which the “job” of an organizational ombudsman was defined and a survey was created to measure the accuracy of this definition. Thank you to the following individuals: **Sean Banks; Tom Barnette; Mary Chavez-Rudolph; David Miller; Carolyn Noorbakhsh; Manny Ovalle; Virginia Santiago-Tosado; Janis Schonauer; William Thompson; Marsha Wagner; Merle Waxman; Jennifer Wolf; Gary Yamashita; and Thomas Zgambo.**

In November 2008, 13 volunteers met for the first Item Writing Workshop. During this session, “items” (i.e. exam questions) were drafted, reviewed and approved for the creation of the first version of the certification examination. Thank you to the following individuals: **Wendy Friede; Nathanael Haddox; Nizhoni Hodge; Catherine**

*(continued on page 13)*

# Certification Program Progress

**BY CAROLYN NOORBAKSH, NATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY LABORATORY**

At its July 2009 meeting, the IOA Board approved the governance documents for the new certification program as presented by the Certification Task Force. The approval formally launched the program entitled “CO-OP,” or Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner. The Board of Certification for CO-OP will have a Board of Directors, officers, committees and task forces. It will replace the IOA Certification Task Force and manage all matters regarding certification. The IOA Board of Directors will appoint the initial CO-OP Board of Directors. The CO-OP Board will have five standing committees to conduct the primary business of the certification program: Nominating, Eligibility, Professional Practices, Finance/Audit and Appeals. Volunteers are still being sought to serve on the Board and committees; several ombudsmen who represent a cross-section of IOA membership along diverse personal, professional, sector and geographic dimensions have already volunteered.

The first offering of the Certification Exam is planned for October or November 2009. The initial exam will be offered at a reduced rate and at approximately three or four test centers across the United States. In the future, the exam will be administered at the annual IOA conference. The reduced cost for the preliminary offering in fall 2009 is intended to motivate people to take the initial exam; compensate for the additional travel expenses some may incur; and mitigate the inconvenience of the extended time it will likely take to receive test results. However, this longer timeframe will be necessary to allow for the initial determination of the required passing point for the exam. This pass point determination process will be conducted under the guidance of Schroeder Measurement Technologies (SMT), the consulting organization retained to develop and conduct many aspects of the IOA certification process, and will also include several organizational ombudsmen volunteers from IOA.

Please be on the lookout for more information on how to register to take the exam. In advance of the first offering, CO-OP will develop a Candidates Information Bulletin. After the initial fall exam, the next certification examination offering will be at the 2010 conference in New Orleans. Stay tuned for more information! ●



*(Thank you continued  
from page 12)*

**Langlois; Carolyn Noorbakhsh;  
Anu Rao; David Rasch; Janis  
Schonauer; Virginia Santiago  
Tosado; Albin Swenson; David  
Talbot; Marsha Wagner; and  
Gary Yamashita.**

In February 2009, 6 volunteers met for the second Item Writing Workshop. They drafted, reviewed and approved additional test questions and finalized the first version of the examination. Thank you to the following individuals:

**Belinda Newman; Carolyn Noorbakhsh; Margaret Lee Potts; Marsha Wagner; Jennifer Wolf; and Gary Yamashita.**

Lastly, thank you to all of the Certification Task Force members who, under the leadership of **Marsha Wagner**, assisted along the way in creating the certification program and kept the effort going strong.

### **CERTIFICATION TASK FORCE MEMBERS:**

**Sean Banks; Tom Barnette; Ilene Butensky; Mary Chavez-Rudolph; Nancy Deering; Carolyn Noorbakhsh; Janis Schonauer; Judi Segall; Marsha Wagner; Merle Waxman; Jennifer Wolf; and Gary Yamashita.**

Please feel free to contact Marsha Wagner at **wagner@columbia.edu** if you are interested in participating on the CO-OP Board or one of the CO-OP Committees.

# What Are You Going To Do?



**BY NICHOLAS DIEHL, NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH**

Following is a hypothetical situation that an ombudsman might face. You are invited to weigh in with what you would do by sending us your comments. Please keep your comments brief so we can publish as many as possible.

### **SCENARIO**

You recently agreed to serve as a mediator in a long-standing conflict between two employees, Laura and Liz. Both agreed the mediation session would be a confidential meeting and understood that you, as a mediator, would not take sides or make any decisions about the outcome of the mediation. They felt that if they didn't resolve their issues then something bad would happen — they would either lose their jobs or have a physical confrontation — so they were both interested in moving ahead with the process.

The problems between Laura and Liz went back several years. Both accused the other of spreading rumors and damaging each other's belongings, including allegations of tire slashing. During the first session, Laura told Liz that a lot of people have problems with Liz.

Laura said one of their co-workers, Fred, recently said he never believes anything Liz says. This statement shocked Liz. She said she knew Laura was lying because Fred was a friend of hers and she had just given him a ride home the previous week.

Although the mediation ended with a number of unresolved issues, Laura and Liz said they would try to put their problems behind them and move forward.

Three days after the mediation session, Liz called you. She said she had confronted Fred about his alleged remarks. Liz acknowledged that she wasn't supposed to talk to anyone about what was said in mediation, but was glad she spoke to Fred because he verified that he had never said anything negative about Liz. Now Liz wants to set the record straight with Laura in another mediation session.

In the face of this violation of confidentiality, what would you do?

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

To post your response, click on the Zoomerang Weblink below or copy and paste this link into your web browser.

Link: <http://tinyurl.com/mn6f7s>

# IOA Committee Recruitment: Volunteers Wanted!

BY JENNIFER WOLF, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

IOA is looking for new volunteers for the following committees and task forces. Below is a description of each committee's responsibilities and activities, the estimated monthly time commitment, and the point person to contact if you are interested in learning more about the committee and/or signing up to volunteer. **Please join us!**

## ❑ Certification Task Force

**Responsibilities:** To investigate, design and plan a certification program for organizational ombudsmen (to be known as "CO-OP"), and an accreditation program for organizational ombudsman programs. Individuals are needed for the Board of Certification as well as the following committees: Nominations; Finance; Eligibility; Appeals; Professional Practices.

**Volunteer Time Commitment:** 3-5 hours/month

**Contact:** Marsha Wagner: [wagner@columbia.edu](mailto:wagner@columbia.edu)

## ❑ Communications Committee

**Responsibilities:** Primary projects: 1) Improving the design, functionality and content of the IOA website; 2) Researching and collecting materials from organizational ombudsman offices (evaluation surveys, charters, office manuals, etc.) and creating a clearinghouse of information and best practices. 3) Co-editors for the *Independent Voice*, the IOA newsletter.

**Volunteer Time Commitment:** Monthly, 1.5-hour conference calls, with an additional 3-5 hours/month outside of calls (for newsletter co-editors, additional time will be required in two weeks prior to publication).

**Contact:** Samantha Levine-Finley: [levinesa@od.nih.gov](mailto:levinesa@od.nih.gov)

## ❑ Nominations and Elections Committee

**Responsibilities:** Administer elections for membership on the association's Board of Directors.

**Volunteer Time Commitment:** Three 1-2 hour conference calls per year; additional time as needed.

**Contact:** Jan Schonauer:  
[janis.schonauer@alliancebernstein.com](mailto:janis.schonauer@alliancebernstein.com)

## ❑ Conference Planning Committee

**Responsibilities:** All details involved in planning, organizing, and executing the IOA Annual Conference. Tasks include theme development, call for papers, programming, pre-conference course planning, social and special events, publicity, financial management, awards and recognition, sponsorship and donations.

**Volunteer Time Commitment:** 3 hours per month, year-round; all meetings via conference call

**Contact:** John Carter: [carterj@citadel.edu](mailto:carterj@citadel.edu)

## ❑ Conference Oversight Committee

**Responsibilities:** Make recommendations to the IOA Board that set the overall direction and policies around the association's annual conference.

**Volunteer Time Commitment:** 1-hour conference calls 6 – 12 times per year, plus as-needed communications via email.

**Contact:** Don Noack: [ddnoack@sandia.gov](mailto:ddnoack@sandia.gov)

## ❑ Strategic Planning Committee

**Responsibilities:** To work with the association to develop and maintain a visionary 5-Year Strategic Plan that serves as a blueprint for all IOA core capabilities, goals, objectives, strategies and activities. Current special projects include: 1) Analyzing the business case for hiring an Executive Director; 2) Developing a strategy for building and sustaining strategic alliances.

**Volunteer Time Commitment:**  
1-3 hours/month

**Contact:** Eric Berger:  
[eberger@deloitte.com](mailto:eberger@deloitte.com)



# Welcome New Members

## Affiliate Members

**Barbara Beatty**, Pepperdine University School of Law, Strauss Institute for Conflict Resolution, Phoenix, AZ, USA

**Peter Bowne**, Jamaica Plain, MA, USA

**Rosalind Cresswell**, Ombudsman, North Shore Medical Group, Swampscott, MA, USA

**Kristin Ecklund**, Irvine, CA, USA

**Deborah Huryta**, Ombudsperson, University of Nebraska at Kearney, Kearney, NE, USA

**Gabrielle Kluck**, Field Administrative Officer, UNRWA, Amman, Jordan

**Susan Malan**, Yarmouth, ME, USA

**Kathleen Roberts**, Executive Director of Diversity, University of So. Maine, Portland, ME, USA

**Cinzia Scalabrini**, Administrative Investigation, Michael & Cerullo, Kettleby, ON, Canada

**Cornita Spears**, Internal Audit Director, MacKlenburg County Internal Audit, Charlotte, NC, USA

**Alicia Spencer**, Chaplain Resident, St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, Houston, TX, USA

**Ramavarma Thamburan**, Chief, Conduct and Discipline Team, UNMIT, Darwin, NT, Australia

## Associate Members

**Michael Dressman**, Faculty Ombudsman, University of Houston - Downtown, Houston, TX, USA

**Katherine Hale**, Florida Gulf Coast University, Ft. Myers, FL, USA

**Kevin Harris**, Student Ombudsman, Art Institute, Arlington, VA, USA

**Kristen Robillard**, Univ. Ombudsperson, Concordia University, Montreal, ON, Canada

## Members

**Uwem Akangson**, The Ombudsman Analyst/Reviewer, Access Bank PLC, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria

**Anne Bacher**, Operational Excellence Ombudsman, Pelco, Clovis, CA, USA

**Khurshid Bhimani**, Principal Advisor, Office of Human Resource Management, United Nations, Forrest Hills, NY, USA

**Beth Bovis**, Vice President, A.T. Kearney, Inc., Madison, WI, USA

**Melissa Cameron**, Bayer Corporation, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

**Emidio Cerasale**, Project Ombudsman, Thirst USA, Waterbury, CT, USA

**Kirk Christensen**, Laboratory Ombudsman, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, NM, USA

**Scott Deyo**, Ombudsman, Department of Defense, Arlington, VA, USA

**Sylvia Garvin**, Ombuds Representative, Career Concepts, Inc., Blue Bell, PA, USA

**Paulette Gerkovich**, McKinsey and Company, New York, NY, USA

**Adelina Gomez**, Director, University of Colorado, Aurora, CO, USA

**Hayden Hughes**, Ombudsperson, Alma Mater Society, University of BC, Vancouver, BC, Canada

**Monica Hughes Davy**, Director, Conflict Prevention and Resolution, OEEODM, FDA, HHS/FDA, Rockville, MD, USA

**Debbie Izzard**, Employee Ombudsman, TD Bank Financial Group, Toronto, ON, Canada

**Lorrain Kelly**, Ombudsman Officer, Health Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada

**Willem Kweens**, Ombudsman, Mars, Inc., Veguel, Netherlands

**Janet Labelle**, Principal, Procurement Investigations and Inquiries, Office of the Procurement Ombudsman, Ottawa, Canada

**Jose Luis Larrondo Cano**, Ombudsman, Scotiabank Interlat, SA, Mexico City, D.F., Mexico

**Catherine Lauzon**, Exec. Dir., Ethics and Ombudsman Services, Health Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada

**Elizabeth Lincoln**, Ombuds Representative, Career Concepts, Inc., Blue Bell, PA, USA

**Eileen Martinez**, Ombudsman, St. Thomas University, Miami Gardens, FL, USA

**James Pappas**, Ombudsman, Putnam Investments, Boston, MA, USA

**Richard Ralston**, Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, USA

**Kent Rhodes**, Visiting Professor, Pepperdine University, Irvine, CA, USA

**Gregory Sando**, Michigan Economic Development Corp., Lansing, MI, USA

**Serena Siqueira**, Health Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada

**Christopher Sotak**, Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Jefferson, MA, USA

**Oriana Trombetti**, Office of the Procurement Ombudsman, Ottawa, QC, Canada

**Sophia Viola**, Ombudsman, Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA, USA

**Cherie Williams**, Complaints Officer, WorkSafe BC, Vancouver, BC, Canada

## Retired Member

**John McLaughlin**, McLaughlin & Associates, Lynnfield, MA, USA