

### **Origin of Ombudsman**

The word Ombudsman is a Swedish term that originated in Sweden in the early 1800s as an office or public official to receive grievances from the citizenry against the government and the bureaucracy of the government and that classic form of an Ombudsman or Ombuds office had subpoena powers and was empowered to do investigations, render decisions and issue findings. Although it never had the ability to make decisions or overturn decisions by the government. That classic Ombuds model is still in practice to certain degrees in Europe and parts of the United States as well.

The type of Ombuds office that I'm involved with at Auburn and the type of Ombuds office that is most typical of colleges and universities is what's termed an organizational Ombuds office. An organizational Ombudsman or Ombuds person or Ombuds office whose posture is more of a conflict resolution or dispute resolution specialist: someone who has training in conflict management and can assist individuals with the informal resolution of workplace concerns or issues. Classically, but not always, the Ombudsperson is also an employee of the institution as is the case here. The contrast to a classic Ombuds office is that an organizational Ombudsman has no investigative powers, does not conduct investigations, does not determine right or wrong, or guilt or innocence of parties, but instead rather facilitates communication and works with people to meet their goals of resolving conflicts in an informal way at the workplace. The tenets of that work involve: confidentiality—or creating an environment of confidentiality,

independence from the other administrative structures on campus in neutrality or impartiality not serving as an advocate for either institution or individual.

<http://www.aces.edu/extcomm/ombuds/origin.php>