

## **CHARTER AGREEMENT FOR THE OMBUDS OFFICE AT BARNARD COLLEGE**

### **I. Introduction**

In 2016 Barnard College established its first Ombuds Office.

### **II. Scope of services**

The Barnard College Ombuds Office is an independent, impartial, neutral and confidential resource for faculty, staff and students who have concerns with faculty or staff (not one related to a problem with another student).

The Ombuds Office shall provide informal conflict resolution and mediation services to faculty and staff and students with conflicts involving faculty or staff on any issues related to Barnard College, except for matters covered by a union – Barnard College contract.

These services shall in no way replace or be considered a substitute for existing processes.

The Barnard College Ombuds Officer listens to the visitors' concerns, makes informal inquiries to better understand the situation, explores options together with the visitor, offers to facilitate the conversations between the parties through means of informal conflict resolution, such as shuttle diplomacy, facilitated conversation or mediation. Ultimately, the Ombuds Officer helps to resolve the matter in a confidential and impartial manner. In addition, the Ombuds Officer provides information on Barnard College related policies and procedures (e.g. how to report a violation of the College) and refers the visitor to the appropriate designees of the College.

The Ombuds Office is a safe and confidential place to discuss any Barnard College related matters. The Barnard College shall provide safety from retaliation to the visitor who chooses to share their concerns with the Ombuds Office.

The Ombuds Office collects data on trends and identifies ongoing and college-wide trends and issues. Given its unique perspective: being an independent, impartial and confidential resource for the entire Barnard College community, the Ombuds Officer provides feedback to the administration and makes suggestions on how to change certain policies, procedures or practices of the College.

The Ombuds Office helps to promote the culture of respectful and civilized behaviors at the workplace. Through its interventions, it may help to restore trust and communication among the parties of a dispute.

The services offered by the Ombuds Office do not replace other processes at Barnard College. The Ombuds Officer would never conduct a formal investigation procedure. The Ombuds Office offers an alternative dispute resolution method to the formal channels.

Furthermore, the Ombuds Office is not a responsible employee under Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 to the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Title IX) and not a campus security authority under The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act). The Ombuds Office is not an office of notice and is not an office of record.

### III. Guiding principles

The Ombuds Office of Barnard College is a member of the International Ombudsman Association and adheres to its Standards of Practice [https://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA\\_Main/media/SiteFiles/IOA\\_Standards\\_of\\_Practice\\_Oct09.pdf](https://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA_Main/media/SiteFiles/IOA_Standards_of_Practice_Oct09.pdf) and Code of Ethics [https://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA\\_Main/media/SiteFiles/Code\\_Ethics\\_1-07.pdf](https://www.ombudsassociation.org/IOA_Main/media/SiteFiles/Code_Ethics_1-07.pdf).

The Ombuds Office reports to the President in a way that is independent of regular reporting structures. To ensure objectivity, the Ombuds Office shall operate independent of the administrative authorities. This includes not disclosing confidential information about matters discussed in the Ombuds Office with anyone at Barnard College, including the President to whom the Ombuds Officer reports.

Barnard College shall not request the Ombuds Officer to disclose confidential communications or to serve as witnesses.

The only exception to maintaining confidentiality is when the Ombuds Officer perceives serious risk of imminent harm.

The Ombuds Officer would only intervene in a matter (e.g. disclose the name of the visitor and the specific issue with anyone else) when she receives permission from the visitor to discuss the issue with anyone outside of the Ombuds Office. Participation in the informal conflict resolution processes is always voluntary.

The Ombuds Officer works informally, does not hold any decision-making power. The Ombuds Office has no authority to adjudicate, change policies or procedures of Barnard College or to provide legal advice. The Ombuds Office does not keep any records. All records are destroyed periodically.

The Ombuds Office would only keep data on college-wide issues, trends and statistics for the purpose of analyzing and reporting patterns and making recommendations to the Barnard College.

The Ombuds Officer does not advocate or represent either party in the dispute; she has to remain an impartial and neutral third party. The Ombuds Officer only advocates for due process and fairness.

Everyone from the Barnard College community who utilize the services of the Ombuds Office will be considered to abide by these principles.