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MEMORANDUM

To: Julio Frenk
University President

From: Tomás A. Salerno
Chair, Faculty Senate

Date: April 21, 2017

Subject: Faculty Senate Legislation #2016-58(D) – Resolution to Establish an Ombudsperson for Staff, Administration and Professional Employees

The Faculty Senate, at its April 19, 2017 meeting, voted unanimously to approve the resolution to establish an ombudsperson for staff, administration and professional employees.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS The University of Miami is committed to creating a culture of belonging and fostering an environment that perpetuates trust and equity; and

WHEREAS The University of Miami respects the right of all individuals to be treated with respect and dignity,

BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Faculty Senate of the University of Miami, do hereby recommend the following:

- Appointment of at least one ombudsperson (in accordance with the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* of IOA) to assist the staff, administrative, and professional employees for each campus, reporting to the President through the Office of the Provost and
- Consideration of unifying the faculty and staff ombuds under a formal Office of University Ombudspersonnel.

This resolution is forwarded to you for your consideration.

TAS/rh

Enclosure

cc: Thomas LeBlanc, Executive Vice President and Provost

Rationale for and Resolution to Establish an Ombudsperson for University of Miami Staff, Administrative, and Professional Employees

Respectfully submitted for consideration by GWC subcommittee members:
 Linda Neider (Chair), Jo Nel Newman, and Katherine Wheeler

Purpose: The University of Miami promotes a “culture of belonging,” one in which diversity and integrity are embraced as core values. Stimulating such a culture requires fostering trust and transparency in relationships among all constituents. To ensure that the University Faculty and students have a way to express their concerns in a safe, confidential context, the university established independent ombudspersons to listen to issues, to help identify potential resolution strategies, and to informally investigate problems for both faculty and students. Currently, however, such services are unavailable to the university’s staff, administrative, and professional employees, many of whom hesitate to escalate matters of concern by going to a Human Resource representative to discuss or report problems. A review of the Ombuds Blog/Higher Ed, a major information conduit in this area, lists over 400 colleges and universities with formal Ombuds Offices. Most provide assistance for faculty, staff, and students under a single independent office that reports to the President of the University through the Office of the Provost. The table below lists a few universities with such a structure, and shows the constituents served.

Table 1: Sample Universities with “Office of the Ombudsman”

University	For Faculty	For Staff	For Students
Amherst	✓	✓	separate
Brown	✓	✓	grad, post doc, med students
Columbia	✓	✓	✓
Cornell	✓	✓	✓
MIT	✓	✓	✓
Princeton	✓	✓	✓
U Penn	✓	✓	✓

Although there are a number of sound reasons why one or more ombudspersons should be dedicated to providing assistance to staff who experience work-related conflicts or problems, including promoting a "culture of belonging," other major advantages include minimizing the need for formal grievance hearings and potentially costly litigation. Perhaps most importantly, ombudspersons provide our staff with a sounding board for their concerns in a totally confidential way.

It should be noted that although the appointing authority for ombuds positions is the President through the Office of the Provost, the ombudsperson does not report to the administration. Rather, such appointees abide by the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) acting as a neutral party to ensure that fair practices and treatment are cornerstones of our university community.

Proposal: Our ad hoc committee proposes that the GWC and Faculty Senate adopt the following resolution, and that it be forwarded to the President for his immediate consideration:

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