Job Description:
FUNCTION: The SNR Graduate Student Ombudsperson is a resource for graduate students who have academic advisers with an SNR appointment or who are receiving financial support with supervision from SNR faculty. The SNR Ombudsperson will serve as a resource for SNR graduate students by operating as a facilitator, assisting in explaining procedures and advising graduate students in complaints and conflict situations.

The position is not to be a resource for SNR undergraduate students.

The ombudsperson will meet at least twice a year (early in the fall and spring academic semesters) with SNR graduate students to explain the position and its functions.

The Ombudsperson will listen in an unbiased manner to the concerns of graduate students, clarify procedures, discuss options and when required or requested act as an intermediary or as an advocate for the graduate student.

The Ombudsperson will work to ensure fair processes for the graduate student and promote the SNR commitment to excellence in graduate education.

In assisting the graduate student the Ombudsperson will use confidentiality, neutrality, independence and flexibility and will place emphasis on non-adversarial problem-solving options such as mediation, rather than formal, rights-based options.

PROCEDURE: If there are issues between an SNR graduate student (advisee) and their adviser, the following five-step process should be followed to resolve such issues. NOTE: An SNR graduate student is defined as having an academic adviser faculty with an SNR appointment or receiving financial support with supervision from SNR faculty.

Any SNR graduate student may meet with that Ombudsperson before or after any of the steps in the following process.

The graduate student and the Ombudsperson (when involved) should document each step undertaken in the process.

1. The advisee should speak with the adviser about the issue. The advisee may request the Ombudsperson to be present at such a meeting.
2. If there is no resolution in step 1, the advisee should meet other members of the advisee’s supervisory committee. The advisee may request the Ombudsperson to be present at such a meeting.
3. If there is still no resolution after steps 1 and 2, the advisee should schedule a meeting with the SNR Graduate Committee. That meeting will include: the advisee, the adviser,
available SNR Graduate Committee members and Ombudsperson. The Committee will recommend ways in which the advisee and adviser can work together to resolve the issue. Such recommendations may include proceeding to step 4.

4. If the outcome of that meeting and recommendations do not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the advisee and adviser will be required to meet with the Ombudsperson to attempt to resolve the issue.

5. If the outcomes of steps 1 through 4 do not resolve the issue, the advisee and adviser will meet with the SNR Director for final resolution of the issue. The Director will consult the Ombudsperson in making a final resolution.

The Ombudsperson will report to the SNR Director on all meetings with SNR graduate students. These reports will be confidential regarding the identity of the graduate student and affected faculty adviser if related to Steps 1 and 2 of the above process. If the process reaches Steps 3, 4 or 5, confidentially would not be possible and the affected graduate student and faculty adviser would be so advised before proceeding to those steps.

The Ombudsperson would make periodic reports to the SNR faculty on meetings with graduate students that maintain the confidentiality of the graduate student and affected faculty.

PERSONNEL QUALIFICATIONS: The position of the Ombudsperson should be filled by a faculty member with UNL emeriti status from SNR or another UNL unit upon recommendation of the SNR graduate committee and approval of the SNR director. The person ideally should have teaching, advising and graduate student supervisory experience (teaching or research) prior to attaining emeriti status. The person would serve a two-year term with the potential to be reappointed once. The Ombudsperson would be provided with a private office in Hardin Hall and afforded the benefits and services of emeriti faculty in SNR.

Definitions:

Ombudsperson: “Public official who mediates disputes between employees and management.”

Ombudsman; plural noun: ombudsmen “an official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against maladministration, especially that of public authorities”

Wikipedia: “The typical duties of an Ombudsman are to investigate complaints and attempt to resolve them, usually through recommendations (binding or not) or mediation.”