

# 2018-2019 CAMPUS ISSUES

## No problem too big or too small. Let's talk!

Conflict resolution processes are most likely to be successful when used early, and the Ombuds Office encourages staff, faculty and students to bring concerns to us before they escalate to crises. We also want to reinforce that we are available to help with issues that already have become extremely serious, such as safety concerns, unethical conduct, and financial mismanagement. Our new tagline is "No problem too big or too small. Let's talk!"

### Campus Change

Research and practical experience have established that change, even positive change, can be extraordinarily difficult. The University of Iowa has experienced enormous change over the last few years, including new leadership, reorganizations, new facilities, new initiatives, budget model changes, program closures, layoffs, and changes in roles and responsibilities for individual faculty and staff. This has resulted in significant stress at all levels of the campus community, which, at least temporarily, may reduce job satisfaction and work performance. When change is planned, it is possible to predict the consequences of this change and take proactive steps to support individuals and departments in handling the change in more effective ways. One planned change for which the University could prepare better is new leaders coming to campus, each bringing new priorities, styles, and strengths. This is especially important given the number of new leaders joining UI. There are two well-regarded but part-time staff who provide change management services within University Human Resources, but we do not believe this is sufficient to meet the needs of campus, be as proactive as possible, and minimize the negative consequences of change.

## Effective Leadership

Successful campus leaders at all levels display a number of essential characteristics. As they make decisions, effective leaders are able to balance their own needs (such as a positive reputation and career advancement) with the needs of the University and the constituents they serve. Also important are transparency, fairness, and the ability to consider multiple perspectives and multiple options. Extremely important, from our point of view, is the willingness to address conflict. We often become aware of areas on campus with chronic issues such as low morale, reduced productivity, and poor retention related to systemic conflict. In a number of these situations, we find that a leader's inaction has contributed to the problem. We support the new University Human Resources initiative to provide required training on a number of critical topics to all supervisors across campus. However, knowing the right thing to do and actually doing it are two different things. The University must support supervisors and leaders in developing the will and courage to address conflict. The Ombuds Office is working with Learning and Development in University Human Resources on ways to encourage leaders and others to change their attitudes towards conflict so they are prepared to address it when it inevitably occurs.

#### **OMBUDS OFFICE MOVE**

The Ombuds Office moved into the third floor of the Jefferson Building in March 2019. Our new address is:

Third Floor Jefferson Building 129 E. Washington Street Iowa City, IA 52242-1402



