

**Shreya Trivedi, MNM, CO-OP®**



3/15/2016

University of Oregon  
5210 University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR, 97403-5210

Dear Search Committee Members:

As a seasoned and well-trained dispute resolution professional, I am pleased to submit my letter and attached resume in application for the position of University Ombudsperson at the University of Oregon. I currently serve as Director of the Ombuds Office at the University of Central Florida (UCF), the second largest public research university in the nation. My appointment to this position followed ten years of progressive professional experience at UCF.

As Director of the Ombuds Office, I currently work with the entire university community, which includes twelve regional campuses and the College of Medicine. I am a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner as well as a Florida Supreme Court certified county mediator.

As a dispute resolution professional, communication skills in all forms (verbal, written and listening) have been critical to delivering exemplary service and providing an excellent resource to the university community. The UCF Ombuds Office has been a standard bearer within the larger ombuds professional community and strictly adheres to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. My prior experience in international student services heightened my understanding of cross-cultural issues and propelled me to advance my own cultural competencies in delivering services to the university community.

My work as an ombudsman has been truly meaningful for me personally and professionally. Along with the privilege of helping others, it offers one the opportunity to continuously grow and improve. I believe that my experience with the role of an organizational ombudsman, commitment to the profession, ability to effectively communicate, working knowledge of a large, public university's structure, policies and procedures and my personal commitment to positive change and helping others will make me an excellent candidate for this position.

Enclosed, please find my resume and list of references. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely

Shreya Trivedi



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**Objective** To serve as the University Ombudsperson at the University of Oregon, which would allow me to utilize my conflict resolution skills, knowledge and experience and be a valuable resource to the organization.

**Experience** **University of Central Florida, Orlando** *May 2011 – Present*  
**Director, Ombuds Office**

- Serve the students, faculty, and staff at the second largest university in the nation (with enrollment in excess of 60,000) to manage and resolve their conflicts as ombudsman.
- Practice all duties by adhering to the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics of the International Ombudsman Association and by maintaining the tenets of confidentiality, informality, impartiality, and independence.
- Perform all duties of an organizational ombudsman by listening to concerns, assisting with generation of options, making presentations, offering workshops/trainings, clarifying policy, making referrals, staying current on all matters affecting the profession, facilitating discussions and opening lines of communication between individuals.
- Collect, analyze and present anonymous trend data to university administrators in an effort to bring about positive systemic changes.
- Supervise and manage the office budget and staff, which includes one Assistant Ombuds and up to two student assistants.

**University of Central Florida, Orlando**

**Assistant Director, International Admissions**

*January 2010 – May 2011*

**International Admissions Coordinator, International Services Center**

- Provide leadership through direct supervision to the Admissions team, Front Desk team, and Scanning unit, by assigning tasks and projects for the team and training them on related procedures.
- Review, implement, and stay abreast of international admissions policy and procedures related to the issuance of immigration documents.
- Act as a liaison to Undergraduate, Graduate Admissions, and several UCF departments on issues related to immigration documentation for prospective and admitted students.
- Monitor the Communication Relationship Management (CRM) system, SEVIS and PeopleSoft to ensure accurate data entry and communications with students.
- Ensure the confidentiality and security of all immigration documents submitted.
- Develop and review detailed statistical reports for the administration.
- Assist in developing a comprehensive plan including fairs, publications, ads, and web advertising for recruiting international students.

**Immigration Advisor, International Services Center**

*August 2007 – December 2009*

- Served as a Designated Service Official (DSO) and advised international students at UCF about how to maintain their immigration status.
- Acted as the liaison for international students with several departments around campus such as the Experiential Learning Office and College of Graduate Studies.
- Developed and implemented the Orientation, Employment, and Travel workshops to international students.

- Established the International Mentoring Program at UCF.

**Coordinator of Recruitment, International Services Center** *June 2006-August 2007*

- Planned, organized and attended international recruitment fairs in South East Asia, the Gulf region, Europe and India to talk to prospective international students
- Provided detailed reports to Assistant Director to evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment trips and conferences.
- Communicated with and advised prospective students on all aspects ranging from admissions to remaining in status.
- Developed relationships with overseas advisors at Education USA centers.
- Acted as a liaison between ISC, educational advisors, and UCF departments.
- Collaborated with faculty members to coordinate and plan recruitment trips
- Presented to prospective students domestically as well as internationally.

**University of Central Florida, Orlando** *September 2001-June 2006*

**Ombuds Assistant, University Ombuds Office, President's Division**

- Received concerns from university students, faculty, and staff members.
- Assisted Ombuds Officer with university related issues.
- Clarified university policies, procedures, and appropriate channels.
- Collected and analyzed statistical data for institutional effectiveness and for presentation in reports.
- Communicated with other departments on campus to address student concerns.
- Represented and promoted office to university community.
- Maintained office files and correspondence.

**Education**

**University of Central Florida**

**Masters in Non Profit Management**

*Graduated: May 2014*

**B.A Advertising/Public Relations, Minor: Marketing**

*Graduated: May 2005*

**Training**

- Understanding & Managing High Conflict Personalities *April 2015*
- Mental Health Symptoms in Ombudsman Practice *April 2013*
- Mind-Hack: Ombudsing with the brain in mind *April 2013*
- Florida Supreme Court County Mediation Training *February 2013*
- Ethical Dilemmas *July 2012*
- Ombudsing and Mediation: Complementary Processes *July 2012*
- Conflict Coaching *April, 2012*
- Foundations of Organizational Ombudsman *July 2011*

**Other**

- IOA Mentoring Committee *February 2015*
- Florida Supreme Court County Mediation Certification *October 2013*
- Assisted with the IOA Foundations Training in Phoenix, AZ *July 2013*
- Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP®) *December 2012*
- IOA Conference Planning Committee *August 2012*
- International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Member *May 2011*

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4/21/2016

My responses to the questions below are influenced by practicing according to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and being a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner (CO-OP®)

**Describe your philosophy regarding your role as an ombudsperson.**

My personal and professional philosophy involves serving others with a positive attitude, kindness and respect. Most people have heard of the Golden Rule, which talks about treating others as you would like to be treated. This is a great concept and has been around for ages but it keeps the focus on you and what you want. Our philosophy in the UCF Ombuds Office follows the Platinum Rule, which believes in treating others as *they* would like to be treated. This takes the focus away from oneself and pays attention to the needs of others.

Being an ombudsperson at the second largest university in the nation has been a challenging, yet immensely rewarding experience. One must relate to students, faculty members, staff members, and parents, as well as to different departments, administrators and community constituents. One needs to be kind, patient, an active listener and a skillful communicator to succeed in this role. I know that to be an effective ombudsperson, one must possess tremendous passion for the profession and a personality that is well-received by all. Above everything, an ombudsperson must care deeply about people and truly believe in the inherent nature of others to do the fair and right thing.

Growing up in a developing country has instilled the value of community service in me and I have been a firsthand witness to the powerful impact of lending a helping hand to others. I personally would not have succeeded in my goals if it was not for people who stood by me and supported me at the university and in my personal life, one of them being the university's first ombuds. I never imagined that I would be an ombudsperson but I always knew that I would work in a profession where I felt like I was making a difference. I have found that in this role. I firmly believe in the value of having an ombudsperson in an institution. I think that it demonstrates the willingness of an organization to face the tough truths which may not arise if not for the ombudsperson. To me, that is the greatest testament to the openness and willingness to improve for an institution.

**How would you address the relationship between systemic concerns and individual cases?**

I approach every individual concern with the awareness and mindfulness that it could potentially indicate a systemic concern. The link to the systemic concern may be apparent immediately or it may take some time. The office is in a unique position and gathers a wealth of information regarding

the climate in an institution. It would be a shame to not utilize this information and provide upward feedback in a manner that the identity of the visitors is protected but the systemic concerns are brought to light and hopefully addressed.

One example of how I addressed the relationship between individual and systemic concerns relates to our homeless student population on campus. The Ombuds Office at the University of Central Florida (UCF) observed a trend related to the increase in the number of homeless students approaching the office, looking for information regarding a homeless student tuition waiver (which is something that each university can award based upon Florida statutes). I discussed this with the leadership in the Office of Student Accounts and this trend was confirmed since the tuition waiver requests are submitted to Student Accounts for review. These waiver requests were submitted on a simple, one page questionnaire and one individual reviewed the requests and made the decision regarding awarding the waivers. The Director of this office was also concerned about this increase and based on several conversations it was apparent that a more structured, objective and comprehensive process for reviewing and awarding the tuition waivers would benefit the applicants as well as the university. In a separate conversation with leadership in our Student Development and Enrollment Services (SDES), the Dean of Students had brought up her concern regarding the increase in the number of homeless students on campus and how she did not feel that we had a comprehensive process in place. It seemed like there was a recognition of the need but there were concerns about overstepping boundaries and “hijacking” someone else’s process and “turf.”

In my impartial role, I was able to suggest a joint meeting with the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the Office of Student Accounts in an effort to encourage collaboration and explore sharing of resources. I facilitated the meeting to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to express their thoughts and that they stayed on task and worked towards their common goal. There is a current process that exists for students of concern at UCF and this meeting was an attempt to see if a more detailed process for these homeless students could be developed utilizing some of the processes that SDES already has in place. The goal was not only to award tuition waivers to eligible homeless students but to also connect them with other resources at UCF or in the Orlando community that could assist with employment opportunities, food, housing etc. After the initial meeting to clarify goals and discuss ideas, I ensured that my office remained outside the development and implementation of the new process in order to maintain independence, impartiality and informality.

It gives me great pleasure to say that within one year, a Homeless Student Committee was established and it brought together individuals from different areas on campus. The goal of the committee was to review the tuition waiver requests submitted by the homeless students and also connect them to various resources around campus for support. The committee established a timely and sensitive process which involved in-person meetings with the students to provide more personalized and thoughtful service. The committee would make the determination regarding the student’s eligibility for the waiver and make the recommendation to the Office of Student Accounts,

which in turn would apply the waiver. As a result of this, the university has someone serving from AmeriCorps VISTA in order to assist the university with building capacity and identifying resources for students facing severe poverty or homelessness.

It has been an immensely rewarding experience to work with the university community in addressing systemic issues that arose as individual concerns and have now resulted in life-changing options for students.

### **How would you address issues of impartiality and confidentiality?**

The UCF Ombuds Office has been fortunate to have the support of the leadership and the university community when it comes to following the Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). In 2014, I was able to get an official Charter in place which is available on our website. This Charter describes how the office practices and operates whenever concerns are brought forward. An ombudsperson can address issues of impartiality and confidentiality in an effective manner only if the office is established according to the standards and receives the support of the administration.

The university expressly supports the confidential nature of the office and recognizes the importance of this standard. At the Ombuds Office, we do not keep records of any kind that would identify the visitor. In addition, I do not disclose information provided without the express permission of the visitor or if there is an imminent risk of serious harm. This confidential nature of the office is publicized in the student, faculty and staff handbooks, as well as on the office brochure and website. I have an opening statement that I go through with every visitor and this provides me with the opportunity to explain the non-notice function of the office and what the exceptions to confidentiality are. Whenever someone calls to make an appointment with the office, I do not put any names or identifying information on my calendar. I assert that there is a privilege of confidentiality when it comes to the identity of the visitors and their issues. We utilize the Uniform Reporting Categories developed by IOA to track the concerns that are brought forward to the office and no one has access to that information except for the office staff. Finally, we do not conduct business over e-mail. In this day and age, this is extremely difficult but we explain to visitors that e-mail creates a record and if their concern is confidential, they should refrain from sending us emails. We do collect non-identifying, statistical information for the purpose of trend reporting and identifying systemic patterns.

The confidentiality of the office was recently tested with the new Title IX regulations coming from the Office of Civil Rights within the Department of Education. I had to have several meetings with our Title IX Coordinator and our General Counsel to discuss the role of the office and assert the confidentiality of the office. The fact that the office operates according to the standards played a major role in convincing our leaders that the Ombuds Office should remain a confidential source within the university community. They recognized the importance of providing a safe place where

not only victims but the alleged perpetrators could come and have an off-the-record conversation and think through various options and resources. Of course, if any of the concerns revealed an imminent or ongoing threat of harm to anyone, I would break confidentiality and alert the appropriate individuals/departments. This would be discussed with the visitor in order to provide an understanding of the next steps.

Impartiality is one of the more challenging aspects of being an ombudsperson. I do not take sides in any issues or conflicts or participate in any process where decisions are made. I make my impartial role clear to every individual who accesses the office and frequently have to decline involvement in search committees or formal groups. I explain that I need to stay removed from anything that results in formal decisions being made that may have the impact of selecting or favoring one individual over another. I want to always remain accessible to anyone who feels negatively impacted by a decision and if I was involved in that decision making process, I would lose credibility. I am accessible and available to all members of the university community and anytime I am faced with a situation that may involve a potential conflict of interest, I disclose and provide the visitor with the option to speak to the Assistant Ombuds. For example, I have worked in another department at the university and am familiar with the leadership in that area. If I receive a concern regarding a supervisor in that area, I ensure that the visitor is aware that I used to work there and am familiar with some of the individuals. It gives me immense pride to say that even with that disclosure, I have not had anyone decline to discuss their concerns with me. Sometimes, it makes the visitor feel more comfortable because they feel that I can relate to them.

At the recent IOA conference in Seattle, the former Ombudsman at the National Institutes of Health who served the profession for 34 years, mentioned how ombuds are “multipartial.” He discussed how ombudspersons keep the interests of many parties in mind and are always thinking about how an issue can affect various stakeholders. This indicates a “multipartial” approach and I agree with his perspective. I feel that we are impartial when it comes to providing access and service to individuals but then we are “multipartial” when we are involved in addressing the concerns that are raised.

**How would you demonstrate your experience in fostering diversity and inclusion in your work?**

Diversity and inclusion are embedded deep within my soul. I was an international student and an immigrant in this country. I have experience and understanding of what it means to be a minority. When I worked at the International Services Center at UCF, I was one of the founding members of a mentoring program for international students. There was a clear need to have a program such as the International Mentoring Program to provide guidance and support to international students and also educate the university community about the challenges faced by this population. This program matches new incoming international students with current university faculty and staff members to promote understanding and appreciation of various cultures, backgrounds, viewpoints, religions and at the same time, provide a support system for the students. It gives me immense pride to know that

this program continues to exist on campus and has assisted numerous international students over the years and has broadened the thinking and cultural experiences of several university employees.

In my role as ombudsperson at UCF, I observed a trend involving transgender students. Several students contacted the office, requesting assistance with having their preferred names displayed in their online classroom portals and rosters. At the university, there is a name change process in place and it requires students to go to the Registrar's Office and fill out a form which would update the student's legal name in the university's internal system called PeopleSoft, if they have gone through the process of getting it officially changed. However, many of these students had not gone through the legal process of getting a name change but identified with their preferred name. Students are still able to go to the Registrar's Office and get their preferred names updated in PeopleSoft but the online classes are hosted on a different platform called Webcourses and it did not automatically pull the information from PeopleSoft. Webcourses is under the management of a different department called the Center for Distributed Learning (CDL).

I contacted the leadership in both these areas and we discussed the importance of the university supporting a safe and welcoming environment for this population of students. A new business process was developed by these two offices whereby the Registrar's Office will contact CDL anytime they receive a preferred name change request and the change will be implemented manually. Meanwhile, a more automated solution is in the process of being developed.

Another area where I was able to assist was when it came to providing some information and guidance for individuals with temporary impairments. These are conditions that do not meet the definition of a disability but are more short-term in nature. The Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EO/AA) Officer and I had several conversations regarding requests from individuals with temporary impairments (broken ankle, concussion etc.). The university does not have any programs or a legal obligation to provide services to this group but we were aware of informal assistance being provided by different departments. We embarked on a project to collect information regarding the services available for this group of individuals and Parking Services was willing to engage in a pilot project to provide more accessible parking for pregnant women. This pilot project was successful and today the university has a process whereby pregnant women can request parking spots closer to their buildings. The information gathered by our efforts resulted in a comprehensive guide that was developed by the EO/AA Officer and published on her website to provide guidance and information to individuals. This is an example of how an informal office can work with a formal office to bring about positive change as long as boundaries are clear and each individual's role is understood.

Over the years, the office has developed a reputation for being a safe haven for members of minority communities such as the LGBTQ and the nontheistic community. One of the goals at the University of Central Florida is to be "more inclusive and diverse." At the Ombuds Office, we take this to heart and we are always conscious of the impact on the minority communities of any major changes or decisions.