The Grievance Panel met two times during the 2016-2017 academic year. The first meeting was held on Friday October 28, 2016. The purpose of this meeting was to vote on the following proposed changes to the Bylaws:

1. Remove the position of secretary as an office of the Grievance Panel
2. Extend the term of elected members from 3 to 5 years.
3. Extend the term of the Ombudsperson to three years and extend eligibility to Grievance Panel members in their second year

Rationale for changes:

1. This position is obsolete
2. Grievances have been rare in recent years and there is little institutional memory. Longer terms should not be unduly burdensome, since the committee rarely has any business, and this would both allow members to gain some useful experience over a longer term and is a necessary context for the third proposed change to the Bylaws.
3. Recent Ombudspersons have become painfully aware of the fact that they are untrained and relatively inadequate for a position of considerable importance and sensitivity. They would like to see the Ombudsperson serve for a longer period so that he/she can gain competence from experience. We would also welcome receiving some professional training (if the university will pay for this, which then becomes another argument for a longer term).

There was unanimous approval of these thee proposed changes. They were presented at the AS&E Faculty Meeting on November 16, 2016 and were passed on a faculty vote on December 14, 2016.

With these changes in hand, the Grievance Panel Chair Jeff Zabel and current Ombudsperson Mary Shultz met with the Executive Committee to inform them of the Panel’s ongoing discussion about ways to strengthen the Ombudsperson position. This led to a meeting on April 20 with Deans Glaser and Qu to discuss two important issues; the financing of professional ombudsperson training and the level of confidentiality granted to the ombudsperson position. This meeting was attended by Zabel, Shultz, and Roger Tobin and Fulton Gonzalez from the Executive Committee. In response to this meeting, the Executive Committee sent a letter to the Deans on behalf of the Grievance Panel. This letter requested funding for the professional ombudsperson training that includes program fees, out-of-pocket expenses for the trip, and compensation for time spent at the training given that this takes place during the summer when Tufts is out of session. The letter also requested that the University pay for an outside independent legal counsel to get advice about the feasibility of granting the Ombudsperson a level of confidentiality that would include an exemption from mandatory reporting; a level of confidentiality that the University Chaplain currently has.
The Grievance Panel met on Thursday April 27, 2017 to discuss the meeting with the Deans and the letter that would be sent to the Deans from the Executive Committee on behalf of the Grievance Panel. There was strong agreement on the content of the letter. Those attending the meeting unanimously voted for Jeff Zabel to continue as Chair and for Mary Shultz to continue as Ombudsperson for the next academic year.

Four cases came to the Ombudsman this year. Two were successfully resolved via mediation between the parties involved. A third is in process and appears to also be headed to a successful resolution. The fourth involved the OEO office and is currently stalled.

For the Committee:
Jeff Zabel  Economics Department and Chair
Mary Shultz  Chemistry Department and Ombudsperson
Jeff Berry  Political Science Department
Peggy Cebe  Physics and Astronomy Department
Luis Dorfmann  Civil and Environmental Engineering Department
Soha Hassoun  Computer Science Department
Tama Leventhal  Child Study and Human Development Department
Kris Maniapra  History Department
Jerry Meldon  Chemistry and Biological Engineering
Kamran Rastegar  International Literary and Cultural Studies
Hugh Roberts  History Department