The Grievance Panel met once during the 2017-2018 academic year. The meeting was held on Monday, February 26, 2018.

The general discussion focused on the level of confidentiality granted to the Ombudsperson position. Jeff and Mary summarized their January meeting with Tufts counsel Lili Palacios-Baldwin to discuss extending confidentiality to the Ombudsperson. The outcome of the meeting was that Lili will take a first pass as rewriting both the Grievance Panel Procedures and the AS&E Bylaws for the Grievance Panel to reflect the new level of confidentiality assigned to the Ombudsperson. The understanding is that this level of confidentiality will be the same as what is assigned to the University Chaplain and is like what has been referred to as “Policy Confidentiality” in regard to the Sexual Misconduct Policy at Tufts:

“Confidential resources include medical providers, mental health providers, rape crisis counselors and ordained clergy, all of whom have privileged confidentiality that is recognized by law. These individuals will maintain the confidentiality of a complainant/victim/survivor’s disclosures unless (i) they are given permission to share information by the person who disclosed the information; (ii) there is an imminent threat of harm to self or others; (iii) the conduct involves suspected abuse of a minor under the age of 18; or (iv) as otherwise required or permitted by law or court order.”

One big change in the Ombudsperson position is that he/she can hear complaints about discrimination informally and in confidence without having to report to OEO. There was a feeling that this new level of confidentiality could lead to better relations with OEO which generally represents the interests of the University and not the faculty. This is also true for Human Resources.

The current ombudsperson, Mary Shultz, has undergone the professional training that is now stipulated under the current bylaws for the Grievance Panel. She told us about her experience at the training. Mary pointed out that the number of cases heard by ombudspersons at other institutions with the level of confidentiality that we anticipate will be granted at Tufts is along the lines of 10 or more cases per year versus the few cases that are currently heard annually at Tufts. So, we anticipate that the number of cases that the Ombudsperson will hear at Tufts will increase with the new confidentiality status.

Jeff and Mary met again with Tufts counsel Lili Palacios-Baldwin on Thursday May 24, 2018 to discuss her changes to the Grievance Panel Procedures and the AS&E Bylaws for the Grievance Panel to reflect the new level of confidentiality assigned to the Ombudsperson. This is an ongoing discussion with the expectation that a new version will be completed over the summer and can be voted on by the Grievance Panel early in the Fall 2018 semester so that the changes can be presented at an AS&E faculty meeting later in the semester.
For the Committee:

Jeff Zabel   Economics Department and Chair
Mary Shultz   Chemistry Department and Ombudsperson
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
Sarah Pinto   Anthropology Department
Peter Probst  Art and Art History Department
George Smith  Philosophy Department