Todd Steck is an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences who joined the Ombuds Office as Associate Faculty Ombuds and University Mediation Coordinator (UMC) in July 2018 and became Faculty Ombuds in July 2019.

Since joining UNC Charlotte in 1991 Todd has long been interested in resolution of disputes involving faculty, as reflected in his having served multiple appointments on the University Hearing and University Grievance Committees. Becoming Faculty Ombuds is the next step in the goal of helping improve interactions among faculty.

Dr. Diana Rowan is a Professor in the School of Social Work in the College of Health and Human Services. Employed at UNC Charlotte since 2007, she was appointed as Associate Faculty Ombuds/University Mediation Coordinator in Summer 2019.

Diana is a member of the International Ombudsmen Association and has completed training in Organizational Ombuds Practice. In her professional life outside of UNC Charlotte, she is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has maintained a private practice as a mental health therapist. Through that work, she has a deep respect for the value of a confidential, impartial, informal space to discuss facets one’s faculty role in a peer setting. Her prior training as a therapist has provided much experience in professional ethics and conflict resolution, which translates well to both of her roles – Associate Faculty Ombuds and University Mediation Coordinator.

The profession of Social Work is focused on social justice and empowerment, as well as relating with cultural humility. These principles, combined with the neutrality and impartiality of the Ombuds role uniquely prepare Diana for this valuable service to the faculty.
Any organization has its share of complaints, differing perceptions, and alleged acts of impropriety or unfairness that require attention and resolution. Universities have traditionally addressed the need for conflict resolution through a formal grievance process. As anyone who has participated in such a process knows, it is time-consuming and often emotionally wrought. To assist in opportunities for informal resolution, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte has established a Faculty Ombuds Office.

The Faculty Ombuds serves as an alternate resource for conflict management, prevention and resolution. Our purpose is to provide an informal, impartial, independent, and to the extent allowable by law, confidential source of assistance to individual faculty or groups experiencing conflicts or who have complaints involving others at the University. Our goal is to instill respect, civility and justice in the university. It’s also to create a positive culture, inform systemic change and identify risk.

The Ombuds Office is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

The Ombuds, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombuds does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

The Ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exceptions to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, or if the Ombuds is otherwise required by law to disclose, report or testify. The privilege is held by the office and cannot be waived by others.

The Ombuds, as an informal resource, resists testifying in any formal proceeding, asserting the confidential nature of communications with the Ombuds Office.

Faculty are not required to use the Ombuds Office for informal resolution of conflict, and do so voluntarily.