Caitlan Hendrickson, director of the UA Ombuds Program, wants to make a difference wherever she goes. She says it's important to her to use her skills of mediation and conflict resolution to contribute to her community.

Hendrickson brought those skills with her to the UA, where she serves as director of the Ombuds Program, a confidential, neutral resource available to members of the University community to aid in conflict resolution. She started her position in the fall.

The Ombuds Program is an informal resource for any member of the University community who has concerns, including issues related to academics or the workplace. UA employees, students and parents may be directed to the program director or an Ombuds committee member, who will listen and help to analyze and address the situation. Conflicts might involve communication difficulties with colleagues, intra-departmental or inter-departmental concerns, or other issues.

"I envision it integrating, representing and working in a sensitive and highly competent manner with all of the diverse individuals and communities that make up the University of Arizona," Hendrickson said. "I see the Ombuds Program as having a deep understanding of the campus community, aware of the experiences, needs and goals of its members, and working intently on assisting them with their needs and goals in order to improve their and others' experiences."

Before starting as director of the Ombuds program, Hendrickson worked at the University of Oregon as director of Conflict Resolution Services. At the same time, she ran her own conflict management business, providing conflict management services for local businesses.

 Fluent in Spanish, she also ran an interpretation and translation business, and she has worked in social services with survivors of sexual violence, homeless youth and foster families, among others.

She came to the UA specifically with the Ombuds Program in mind.

"This specific Ombuds Program director position, the University of Arizona and the location felt like a perfect fit for me," Hendrickson said. "I get to do the meaningful work that I love, with a phenomenal group of people in a diverse and sunny locale."

Hendrickson has been working to make sure that the campus community knows about the Ombuds Program and also has made it a goal for the program to be seen as a preventative resource to develop strategies in avoiding negative conflict before it arises.
"Our definition of conflict is broad," said Hendrickson. "Sometimes people have a situation that they find frustrating or annoying, and they don't necessarily define the situation as a conflict. I'd like people to know that we can help with those situations as well."

Hendrickson says she is grateful to be doing what she loves.

"The best part of my job is helping individuals and teams to succeed and thrive, even when faced with complex and challenging circumstances," Hendrickson said. "By helping the individuals and teams that make up the University, I am also able to contribute in meaningful ways to the success of the University as a whole. I enjoy the opportunity to help create positive change."

The Ombuds Program will soon be accepting applications for new Ombuds Committee members, who are nominated by their peers. To learn more about the Ombuds Program and the services it offers, visit the program's website [1].

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/ombuds-program-director-works-create-positive-change

Links: