

The SDSS Ombuds Office

The ombuds office of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey is charged with investigating complaints within the collaboration and attempting to resolve them. The term “ombudsman” is of Swedish origin, and means “representative” or “public advocate”.

The ombuds office has no power, is independent of the management structure of SDSS, independent of any of the individual institutions and outside the hierarchy of SDSS. The office represents and personifies the agreement of all SDSS members to conduct ourselves in a collegial and constructive manner and to adhere to the SDSS agreements and collaboration policies.

SDSS Ombudsfolks

SDSS has two ombudspersons:

SDSS-IV:

- David Weinberg (Ohio State University)
- Jill Knapp (Princeton University)

SDSS-V:

- Michael Wood-Vasey (University of Pittsburgh)
- Jill Knapp (Princeton University)

To instigate a complaint or discussion with the ombuds office, contact one or both ombudspersons directly, or send the matter to ombuds@sdss.org. All emails to this account are saved in a protected archive, and will be forwarded to the ombudspersons.

It has proven useful to have two ombudspersons because of possible conflicts, and to allow matters always to be addressed promptly despite individual schedules. In addition, it's useful for the ombudspersons to discuss and think through possible approaches and solutions together.

Procedures and Guidelines

- All matters brought to the ombuds office are treated in strictest confidence.
- If you have a concern or a question, please, as you feel appropriate, send the matter formally to ombuds@sdss.org or contact one or both of us as above.
- We'll discuss the matter with you to get a feeling for it and may, as a result, suggest you file a formal complaint if you haven't already done so.
- We will then discuss the matter between ourselves and come up with suggestions for next steps. These may include contacting other parties. We will not do so without your permission, and if we do those discussions with other parties are also strictly confidential.

- We'll then attempt to work with all parties to reach a mutually satisfactory solution.
- Not everyone will be 100% happy with all outcomes. The minimum desirable outcome is that all parties can agree to put the matter behind them and resume open, productive collaboration with other members of SDSS. And a matter is not considered closed until all parties are satisfied with the outcome.
- By its nature, this office does not work within the regular academic structures: staff member, undergraduate student, project director, are equal, as are disputes involving SDSS members anywhere within the the collaboration, at different or the same institution(s).
- The ombuds office is prepared to support the filing of a formal complaint or request sanctions in the event that the complaint warrants it.
- The ombuspersons are also available to listen informally if you need to get something off your chest. We're not trained counsellors, though, so there are limits.