



NASA Ombudsman Program Annual Report for 2015

NASA OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

The NASA Ombudsman Program was established in January 2004 in response to a recommendation made by the Columbia Accident Investigation Board. Its goal is to provide the NASA workforce with a supplemental channel of communication to raise issues and concerns they perceive could impact safety, organizational performance, or mission success. The program is based on the principles of confidentiality, neutrality, informality, and independence described in the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice established by the International Ombudsman Association. NASA Policy Directive (NPD) 2025.1, NASA Ombudsman Program, documents the program policy and direction.

In 2015, the NASA ombudsmen saw a total 237 visitors, 66 percent of which were civil servants and 33 percent of which were contractors. The majority of the cases (88 percent) related to organizational performance, which includes (but is not limited to) cases concerning leadership behavior, changes in position status, interpersonal relationships, discrimination, and harassment. Availability of telework to employees was an issue this year, and the ombudsmen worked with visitors to identify potential options for resolving the issue, including providing coaching to employees on how to have conversations with their supervisors and, when necessary, elevate the issue to a higher level of management. Changes in position status, as it relates to promotions, was another common issue, as was lack of transparency around processes and procedures, and the perception that hiring practices resulted in the selection of unqualified candidates. The ombudsmen were able to help visitors address these issues by connecting them with formal resources that explained processes and also by helping them identify the career counseling resources available at their Centers.

The remaining 12 percent of cases concerned safety and mission success. These ranged from the potential for workplace violence to concern about fire drill protocol for persons with disabilities, as well as equipment maintenance issues. The NASA ombudsmen were able to work through the issues by employing existing formal processes to ensure that safety gaps were corrected. In some cases the issues were elevated to a higher level of management, and this resulted in audits of safety process, changes in policy, and additional training.

The NASA ombudsmen provide a valuable service to NASA and its workforce. As a result of their voluntary efforts and assistance, visitors have been able to rebuild work relationships, raise important safety concerns, or move on within the Agency without spending valuable time and resources working through formal processes.

THE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM: AN OVERVIEW

The Ombudsman Program differs from formal resources, like Human Resources, unions, the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Office, and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in that it provides an opportunity to raise concerns in an “off the record” manner. The Ombudsman Program provides:

- Confidentiality – The ombudsman maintains complete confidentiality as to the identity of visitors, except in situations that present an imminent risk of a crime, harm to an individual, or damage to property.
- Neutrality – The ombudsman does not serve as a representative or advocate of any visitor’s concerns within NASA; however, the ombudsman does advocate for fair processes and administration
- Informality – The Ombudsman Program functions outside all formal management, administrative, or criminal processes. The ombudsman does not serve as an agent for notice to NASA. The ombudsman assists the visitor in accessing appropriate formal systems, offices, or processes as needed.
- Independence – The ombudsman is not encumbered by line management functions and in the ombudsman role reports to the Center Director (Center ombudsman) or Headquarters Executive Director (HQ ombudsman).

Visitors that come to the ombudsman have an opportunity to consider options for resolution and discuss the pros and cons of those options. Ultimately, it is the visitors who select what option they will pursue. If asked, the ombudsman can seek out and obtain information for the visitor so that the visitor’s identity is not revealed and there are no records with Agency officials. Visitors often comment on how helpful it is to have an objective ear to listen to their concerns, gather information, and help them strategize next steps without having to “go public” or start a formal process. Our ombudsmen continually help the NASA workforce be heard in a way they hadn’t previously experienced.

In a limited number of instances, the ombudsman may be called on by the Agency to gather confidential information on morale, climate, or organizational performance and leadership concerns. The ombudsman will use focus groups or individual interviews to gather this information, always applying the same four principles (i.e., confidentiality, neutrality, informality, and independence) they use in individual cases. Participation is always optional. All individual identifiers are stripped from messages shared with the Agency, leaving only themes and trends.

The ombudsmen have a number of different ways to ensure a visitor’s concerns are addressed. For example, visitors may ask the ombudsman to meet with a formal resource, such as a representative from human resources, a union, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Office, to gather information

or elevate the situation to Center or Agency leadership. Under confidentiality rules, the ombudsman only identifies the visitor with his/her permission and works to resolve the issue at the lowest level possible.

OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The Ombudsman Program is managed by the Office of Strategic Infrastructure (OSI), which provides Agency ombudsmen with training under the leadership of Assistant Administrator Calvin F. Williams, as well as with logistical and case management support. Although the NASA ombudsman position is a collateral duty, much emphasis is placed on ensuring that each ombudsman practices according to the International Ombudsman Association's (IOA) standards and has the requisite skills to do the job. In particular, ombudsmen are required by NPD 2025.1 to attend the initial ombudsman training provided by the IOA within 6 months of appointment by their Center Director and the annual training to further enhance their skills. Past NASA-sponsored training has covered the following topics: mediation certification, emotional intelligence, coaching strategies, active listening, toxic workplaces, and crucial conversations.

The Ombudsman Program also offers logistical support to Center ombudsmen to ensure each has a safe and private place to meet visitors, support to make certain each Center's population is aware of the program, and advice to safeguard against potential conflicts with their other responsibilities. Several years ago, the Ombudsman Program developed posters that feature the Center ombudsmen and provide contact information. These posters have not only increased program visibility, but have given visitors options when deciding which ombudsman to see. This option decreases the chances of having the ombudsmen's regular duties be in conflict with any issue they might hear.

Most importantly, since all of our ombudsmen are collateral duty, OSI provides case management support to ensure ombudsmen are aware of Agency-wide issues. Ombudsmen meet monthly via video teleconferences to discuss cases and have more extensive semiannual meetings to follow up on the more involved cases or those that could be seen as systemic (involving multiple Centers). A consultant who has more than 20 years of experience as an ombudsman in both the private and public sectors supports the program by helping with case management and offering advice. This additional measure of support guarantees that the ombudsmen are able to help all visitors, no matter the issues, by giving them different vantage points from which to see and frame possible options.

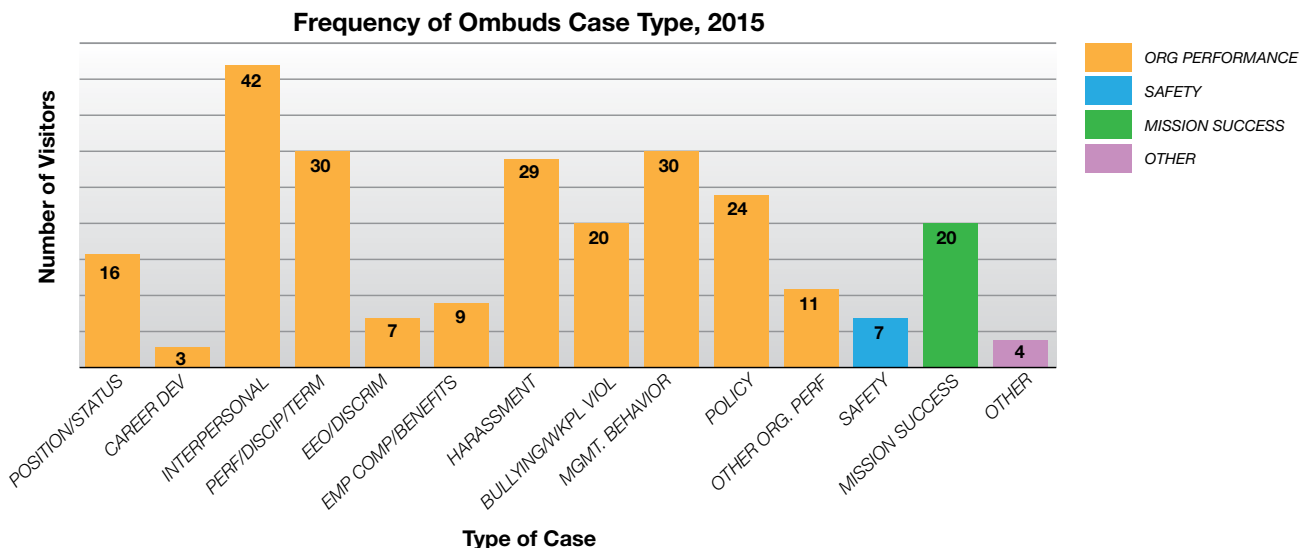
OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM OUTREACH

Center ombudsmen participate in a variety of Center and Agency activities to ensure the NASA workforce is aware of the program and the service it provides. Our ombudsmen participate in Center Health and Safety Fairs held yearly and have partnered with EEO for the past 2 years to host Conflict Resolution Month activities. Ombudsmen also speak with new employees during their onboarding orientation and have recently begun meeting with Center contractor councils to ensure that our resident contractors know how ombudsmen can be of service to them.

In August, the program will release its biannual survey of the NASA workforce to increase awareness of the program and to evaluate its effectiveness. All civil servants (including students) and onsite contractors will have the opportunity to tell us how we are doing. In 2013, when the survey was last released, we heard from contractors across NASA who did not know that they could utilize the program’s services. Since then, the program has made a concerted effort to reach out to contractors and, as a result, we have seen a rise in the number of contractors who seek out our services. Contractor cases accounted for 23 percent of all cases in 2013 and 33 percent in 2015.

2015 CASES AND RESULTS

Since the program’s inception, a majority of the cases have dealt with organizational performance issues. Organizational performance includes leadership behavior, changes in position status (processes for and communication of promotions, transfers, reorganizations, and job classification), interpersonal relationships, discipline/performance/termination, discrimination, harassment, compensation, and benefits and policy. In 2015, 88 percent of our cases were concerning issues related to organizational performance as compared to 87 percent in 2014.



Issues related to policy and changes in position status were common in 2015. A few Centers' ombudsmen have reported telework policy not being implemented fairly or at all. Visitors have communicated that the availability of telework seemed to be dependent on the employee's relationship with his/her supervisor, while others stated that telework was not available to them at all. Other policy issues visitors brought forth included the difficulty of executing travel procedures in a timely manner and the challenge of determining who investigates harassment claims issues related to change in status. The status issues have been numerous this year and generally touch on these related topics: lack of transparency into human resources processes and procedures, difficulty in being promoted when not a supervisor or manager, and the perception that hiring practices don't result in selection of the best qualified candidates.

Ombudsmen were able to help visitors address these issues by connecting them with formal resources who explained processes and by helping identify the career counseling resources available at their Centers. By bringing these issues to the formal resources, ombudsmen have been able to provide them with information on procedures and practices that might be creating undesirable reactions or being implemented inconsistently.

Ombudsmen also saw visitors who were experiencing conflict with supervisors and colleagues. Cases of interpersonal conflict involved supervisors and employees not being in agreement on work responsibilities, disrespectful treatment among coworkers, and perceived bullying. To help visitors resolve these issues, ombudsmen were able to coach them on how to effectively communicate their own issues and bring parties together to facilitate discussions.

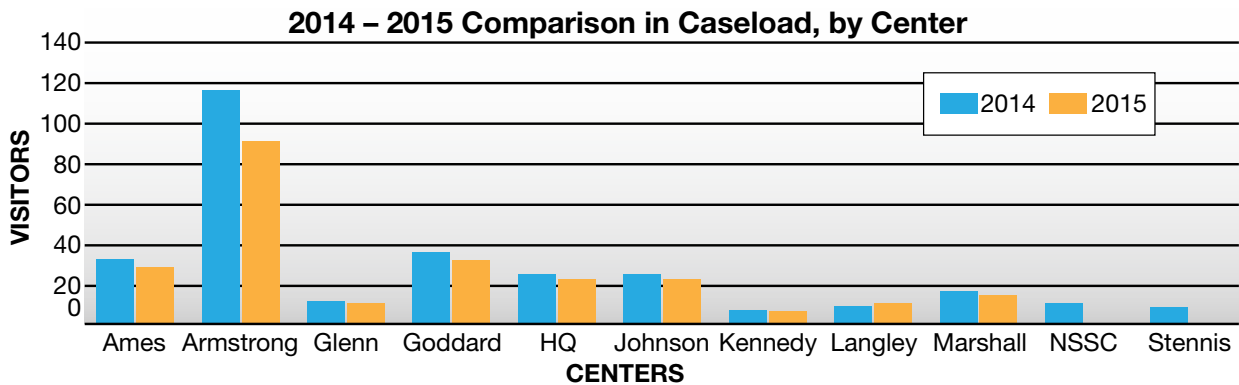
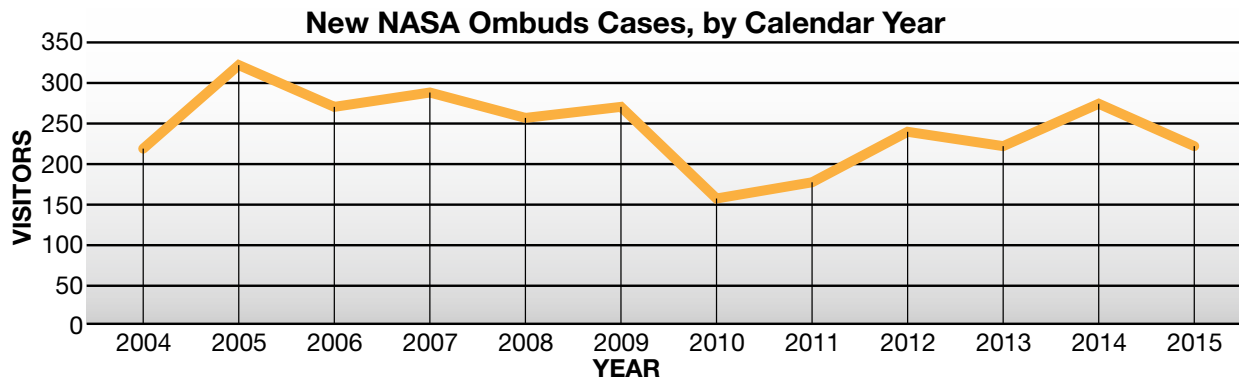
Safety and mission success cases are those that affect the health and safety of employees and contractors or that impact the quality, timing, or integrity of information or support mission. In 2015, 12 percent of our cases were categorized as safety and mission success cases, which is consistent with 2014. This year, safety and mission success cases ranged from the potential of workplace violence to persons with disabilities expressing concern over fire drill protocols.

Other safety and mission success cases that have been brought to the ombudsmen this year include several maintenance issues. At one Center, the ombudsman was informed that records in maintenance databases were inaccurate, incomplete, or approved without the work actually being done. The ombudsman was also informed that procedures for maintenance work were not being followed. For these safety issues, the ombudsmen worked with NASA formal resource personnel to ensure safety gaps were addressed. Safety processes were audited, policies were changed, and additional training was provided.

As in previous years, the percentage of visitors from the civil service ranks surpassed the percentage of contractors who chose to see an ombudsman (66 percent versus 33 percent)¹. Types of contractor cases in 2015 included the following:

- Bullying behavior between contractors or between civil servants and contractors.
- Confusion in the way contracts are written and about who has ultimate authority to give work direction, civil servant or contractor supervisor.
- Issues with contractor personnel moving from one company to another and not receiving adequate description of job assignments or confusion about benefits carried over.

The ombudsmen referred contractors to the Center’s procurement ombudsman or the contracting officer to resolve issues. The ombudsmen also conducted research and referred contractors to their company’s ombudsman, at locations with the service, or to other applicable internal resources when terms of employment such as pay or benefits were involved.



¹ 1 percent of visitors to the NASA Ombudsman Program are students.

FUTURE PLANS

While the Ombudsman Program has been effective in helping the NASA workforce solve workplace issues, continued outreach and program improvement will be of particular importance during the coming year. The NASA ombudsmen are making a concerted effort to meet new employees as they come onboard by participating in new employee orientations. Ombudsmen also will meet with Center contractor councils to inform contractors of the program. Most significantly, the Ombudsman Program will be distributing an Agency-wide survey in August to evaluate program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Internal to the program, the ombudsmen are standardizing operations across Centers and setting program goals by way of a 3-year plan. In the coming year, ombudsmen will meet regularly with formal partners to share data and trends and identify ways to increase our ability to see and escalate early warnings around mission success and safety. We also look forward to continually providing NASA's workforce with its only confidential, neutral, informal, and independent issue-resolution option.

THE NASA OMBUDSMAN

Each year the Ombudsman Program says goodbye to a number of ombudsmen who leave our ranks due to retirement or change in position. This year the Ombudsman Program said farewell to:

George Crimshaw – AFRC

Ruth McWilliams – Headquarters

James Curro – LaRC

Pamela Caruso – MSC

James Barnett – NSSC

Karen Lee Vander – SSC

Six new ombudsmen have been appointed to serve their Center populations.

We welcome the following individuals to our ranks:

Lisa Lockyer – ARC

Gwynn Severt – GRC

Harvey Schabes – GRC

Nelson Parker – MSFC

Christine Gex – NSSC

Robert Watts – SSC



AMES RESEARCH CENTER (ARC)

Jim Arnold

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Dr. Jim Arnold has been with NASA for 51 years and has served as an ombudsman for 4 years. His contributions have included research, branch management, a tour of duty at NASA Headquarters (aerothermodynamics program manager), and division management. Jim has worked in many technical areas including aerothermodynamics, computational chemistry, thermal protection systems (TPS) research and development, arcjet testing, advanced life support, and nanotechnology.

His mentoring program has enhanced the career development of many who advanced to the highest ranks of leadership, management, and research at NASA.



AMES RESEARCH CENTER (ARC)

Jack Boyd

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Jack Boyd serves as senior advisor to the Center Director, senior advisor for History, and a Center ombudsman. Jack started at Ames in 1947, when it was the Ames Aeronautical Laboratory and was still part of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). His own work as an aeronautical research engineer involved wind tunnel studies of supersonic and subsonic aircraft and included major contributions to theories of conical camber. He later did early research on the

design of unpiloted planetary probes to explore Mars and Venus, and he helped develop early configurations for the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo capsules. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Jack increasingly served in managerial positions at NASA Ames. He served as an executive assistant to the Ames Center Director, Deputy Director of Dryden Flight Research Center, Deputy and Associate Director of Ames Research Center, and Associate Administrator for Management at NASA Headquarters. Additionally, he has served as Chancellor for Research for the University of Texas System and has also been an adjunct professor at the University of Texas, Austin, El Paso, and Pan American campuses.



ARMSTRONG FLIGHT RESEARCH CENTER (AFRC)

Louise Boyd

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Louise Boyd has been employed by NASA for more than 30 years. The first 21 years were spent at the Kennedy Space Center, where she participated in various assignments that ranged from software engineering to workforce planning and human resources management. She represented the Agency on a detail in the Executive Office of the President/Office of Management and Budget, Science and Space Programs Branch. She has also served as the Assistant Associate Director at AFRC. In 2004, she transferred to Dryden Flight Research Center. Her assignments have included human resource management, strategic work force planning, and performance improvement. She has been an ombudsman for 6 years. She is passionate about helping others succeed. She has served as an informal and formal mentor most of her NASA career.



ARMSTRONG FLIGHT RESEARCH CENTER (AFRC)

Albion Bowers

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Al Bowers is the Center Chief Scientist at AFRC in Edwards, CA. Al has been at AFRC for 34 years. In his position, Al is responsible for defining the Center's strategic technical direction, including advanced aeronautical designs, research, and space technologies. Prior to his present position, Al served as Associate Director of the Research and Engineering Directorate, Director of Dryden's Aeronautics Mission Directorate, and as a project manager. He also served as the Chief of the Aerodynamics Branch of Dryden's Research Engineering Directorate from 2002 to 2004, acted as Deputy Director of the Research and Engineering Directorate from 2004 to 2008, and acted as special assistant to the Associate Administrator of Aeronautics in 2008. Al earned a B.S. in aeronautical engineering and an M.S. in engineering from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. He was awarded the Exceptional Service Medal in 2006 and the Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal in 2014.



ARMSTRONG FLIGHT RESEARCH CENTER (AFRC)

Kevin Reilly

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Kevin Reilly has been with NASA for almost 12 years. Previously, he worked for the TYBRIN Corporation as an F-16 system program manager for foreign military sales to Bahrain and Egypt after retiring from the United States Air Force. While in the Air Force, he flew more than half of his 20-year career as an operational test pilot in Boeing B-52s and Northrop Grumman B-2s. Kevin also had experience in crisis action. At AFRC, he initially worked as a system safety engineer, supporting numerous Center projects. Due to his operational flight experience, he became the Quality Assurance Branch Chief for 3 years and when AFRC inherited the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA), he was asked to become the Chief Safety Officer for the SOFIA Airborne Platform Project (APP). He recently joined the Management Systems Office as a management and program analyst overseeing all Center processes. Kevin joined the AFRC ombudsman team in 2010.



ARMSTRONG FLIGHT RESEARCH CENTER (AFRC)

Miriam Rodon-Naveira, Ph.D.

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Dr. Rodon-Naveira has been with NASA for 15 years. Previously, she worked for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for 10 years in various capacities from research biologist to branch chief to deputy director for an exposure assessment laboratory. While at EPA, she worked on developing a Diversity Management Program within EPA's Office of Research and Development, as well as leading various Federal Special Emphasis events and employee empowerment initiatives. Since she came to NASA, Dr. Rodon-Naveira has held a number of positions within AFRC, including Higher Education Program Manager and Education Director for 5 years. Dr. Rodon-Naveira has a B.S. in psychology and a Ph.D. in microbiology and recently obtained a graduate certification in industrial hygiene from Tulane University, School of Tropical Medicine and Public Health. She is also fluent in Spanish and conversant in French. She is currently AFRC's occupational health program manager and is the newest addition to AFRC's ombudsman team with two years of service.



ARMSTRONG FLIGHT RESEARCH CENTER (AFRC)

Keith Williams

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Keith Williams has been employed by NASA for 10 years. Prior to this, he was employed by Honeywell Technical Services for 31 years, assigned to various military and NASA contracts in various management roles. In 2001, Keith retired from Honeywell and came to work at Armstrong Flight Research Center as a support contractor assigned to the Management Systems Office (MSO). In May 2006, he began his NASA career at Armstrong as the supervisor of the MSO, responsible for ensuring management system integration, evaluation, and performance. In May of 2015, Keith assumed the position of Center executive officer and continues as the Center's lead ombudsman.



GLENN RESEARCH CENTER (GRC)

Marsha Nall

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Marsha Nall has been employed by NASA Glenn Research Center (GRC) for more than 30 years and joined the ombudsman team in 2013. She currently manages the Glenn Human Research Program (HRP) and is responsible for implementing an interdisciplinary bioengineering program. This is a complex and unique space exploration research and technology development program focused on mitigating risks to health, safety, and performance of astronaut crews during long duration spaceflight. GRC's focus is on exercise countermeasures, computational physiology, and medical capabilities. Marsha started her career at NASA performing research in support of both aeronautics and space systems. She has held both systems engineering and project management roles in developing the International Space Station's (ISS) electrical power system and in large facility-class experiment payloads for the ISS. Marsha received her B.S. in civil engineering from Ohio State University and her M.S. in civil engineering from Case Western Reserve University.



GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (GSFC)

Ed Rogers, Ph.D.

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Dr. Ed Rogers is the Chief Knowledge Officer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, MD. He received a Ph.D. from Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, focusing on the role of cooperation in high tech firms. In the early 1980s, he performed 5 years of international relief work in Southern Lebanon. Prior to returning to academic work at Cornell, Ed operated a private consulting practice focused on knowledge workers and intelligent enterprise. His research and publications apply game theory models to human behavior in organizations. He has consulted with a number of organizations on building conceptual transparency and leveraging collective knowledge. Before joining NASA, he taught strategic management and entrepreneurship at Cornell, Duke, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Ed became an ombudsman in 2012.



GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (GSFC)

Kim Weaver

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Kim Weaver has been with NASA for 16 years and has served as an ombudsman for a little over a year. Kim is currently an astronomer in the Laboratory for High-Energy Astrophysics, using space-based satellites to study galaxies and super massive black holes. Kim previously served as the Associate Director of Science for the Goddard Space Flight Center Astrophysics Division, program scientist at NASA Headquarters for the Spitzer Space Telescope, and press and education/outreach liaison for the NASA Headquarters Astrophysics Division. As the press and education/outreach liaison, Kim participated in discussions regarding policy, procedure, and methodology and worked internal and cross-discipline communications strategy issues. Kim is also an occasional media spokesperson for NASA and has been with the NASA Ombudsman Program since 2013.



GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (GSFC)

Torry Johnson

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Torry Johnson has been with NASA for more than 10 years and has been an ombudsman for 3 years. Torry currently serves as the Assistant Deputy Director of Hydrospheric and Biospheric Sciences in the Earth Sciences Division at Goddard Space Flight Center. In addition, he heads up the Agency's Tribal College and University Project.



GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (GSFC)

Joyce Winterton, Ph.D.

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Dr. Winterton is the senior advisor for education and leadership development for the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia and has served as an ombudsman for 3 years. Prior to her current position, Joyce served as NASA's Assistant Administrator for Education, directing the development and implementation of Agency education programs that strengthen student involvement and public awareness of its scientific goals and missions. Joyce earned her B.S.

and M.S. from Utah State University. She completed her doctorate in teacher education and administration at Colorado State University. Her previous experience includes work for the U.S. Senate, the U.S. Department of Education, a Presidential Advisory Council, National FFA, USA TODAY, and Winterton Associates, a consulting company she founded.



HEADQUARTERS (HQ)

Patty Currier

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Patty Currier is a policy analyst in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO). She has been with NASA for more than 25 years, initially as a contractor, then converting to civil service in 2008. She started her career at Ames Research Center, working on life science research and overseeing spaceflight experiments. She relocated to Kennedy Space Center and expanded her focus to writing, strategy, improving processes and performance, troubleshooting, and enabling mission outcomes. Since moving to Headquarters, she has worked in the former Exploration Systems Mission Directorate, the Office of Education, and OCFO. Her work includes program management, aligning budget to goals, improving data collection and reporting, communicating effectively with the Office of Management and Budget and Congress, and developing policy. Patty has a B.S. from Tufts University and an M.S. and M.B.A. from the Florida Institute of Technology. Patty joined the NASA Ombudsman Program in 2015.



HEADQUARTERS (HQ)

John Lopez

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John Lopez joined NASA as the internal controls team lead in March 2013. John brings more than 12 years of experience working with different Federal Government entities. He joined the NASA Ombudsman Program in 2015. Before joining NASA, John worked as an audit manager at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), where he earned multiple awards for his contribution in high-visibility engagements such as major defense acquisition program reviews, contract management reviews, the U.S. Federal Government consolidated financial statement audit, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) financial statement audit. John holds a B.B.A. with a concentration in accounting from the University of Puerto Rico and an M.S. in finance from the John Hopkins Carey Business School. John is also a certified public accountant.



HEADQUARTERS (HQ)

Brenda Mulac

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Brenda Mulac is the Assistant Director for Planning and Evaluation for Headquarters Operations. Prior to holding that position, she was the Strategic Planning Manager for the Strategy, Architecture, and Analysis (SAA) Office in the Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate (ARMD) at NASA Headquarters. Brenda has been with NASA for almost 7 years as a civil servant, after spending more than 3 years as a contractor at Wallops Flight Facility. Before joining ARMD, Brenda served as the NASA liaison to the FAA's Unmanned Aircraft Office and supported the NASA Airborne Science Program as a mission manager on the DC-8. She also co-led an international working group focused on improving access to airspace over the Arctic for scientific use of unmanned aircraft. Brenda holds a B.S and an M.S. in metallurgical and materials engineering from Michigan Technological University and Colorado School of Mines, respectively, and an M.S. in atmospheric science from the University of Colorado. Brenda joined the NASA Ombudsman Program in 2015.



JOHNSON SPACE CENTER (JSC)

Donna Blackshear-Reynolds

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Donna Blackshear-Reynolds is the Division Chief of the Program Resources Management Division under the JSC Office of the Chief Financial Officer and has been an ombudsman for 5 years. Donna began at JSC in 1981 as a presidential management intern and has served in progressively more responsible positions involving budgeting, program planning, and analysis, as well as program evaluation. Donna's educational background includes a B.A. in Government from the University of Texas at Austin; an MPA from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government; and post-graduate study in public policy at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance.



KENNEDY SPACE CENTER (KSC)

Hortense Diggs

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Hortense Diggs is currently chief of the Education Projects and Youth Engagement Office within the Commutations and Public Engagement Directorate at KSC. Hortense joined NASA in 2000 as a flight assurance manager in the Expendable Launch Vehicles Safety and Flight Assurance Office, where she was responsible for developing and implementing flight assurance activities. She was the mission assurance manager on both Mars Exploration Rover Missions A and B and the Deep Impact Missions. She is a graduate of Prairie View A&M University, where she received a B.S. in mechanical engineering. Hortense joined the NASA Ombudsman Program in 2005.



KENNEDY SPACE CENTER (KSC)

Justin Junod

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Justin Junod is currently civil engineering lead within the Construction of Facilities Division of the Center Operations Directorate at KSC. In 2000, he began his career with NASA as a cooperative education student in the Facilities Engineering Division, where he spent 10 years serving in the roles of project manager, lead design engineer, and construction manager for Institutional and Programmatic Facilities and Systems. He is a graduate of the University of Central Florida, where he received a B.S. in civil engineering and an M.S. in industrial engineering. Justin joined the NASA Ombudsman Program in 2013.



LANGLEY RESEARCH CENTER (LaRC)

Jim Curro

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Jim has been an ombudsman for a year and started his professional career in 1972, when he entered the U.S. Air Force, serving until 1980. His last duty station was Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, and he's been in Southeastern Virginia ever since. Jim became a civil servant with NASA in 1980 and worked at many of the facilities as an engineering technician and group leader. He became a test director at the 8-Foot High Temperature Tunnel in 1995 and still holds that position.



LANGLEY RESEARCH CENTER (LaRC)

Venita Robinson

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Venita began her career with NASA as a cooperative education student in the Public Information Branch at Marshall Space Flight Center. She is a graduate of Tennessee Technological University and Hampton University with a B.S. in English/Journalism and an M.S. in management, respectively. Venita has more than 30 years of Federal experience, the majority of which has been with NASA. She has enjoyed assignments in public relations, human resources, equal employment opportunity, and logistics management at both Marshall and Langley. She served as a recruitment manager, senior human resources specialist, disability program manager, diversity workforce manager, and is currently the LaRC supply and equipment management officer, as well as the Center's property disposal officer. Venita has been an ombudsman since 2013.



LANGLEY RESEARCH CENTER (LaRC)

Shannon Walker

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Shannon began her career as a legal secretary for a law firm in Hampton, VA, in 1982. In 1987, she was selected for a civil service job with the Department of Defense in Norfolk, where she was a contract management assistant. She transferred to LaRC in 1990 as a secretary in the Programs and Resources Division (now referred to as CFO). She later worked in the Office of Procurement for several years and then in the Engineering Directorate. She moved to the Science Directorate in 2000, where she has held several roles (secretary, administrative officer, and management and program analyst). She is now a contracting officer's representative for the science support services contract. Shannon has served as an ombudsman since 2013.



MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (MSFC)

Susan Cloud

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Susan Cloud has more than 34 years with NASA and 9 years with the NASA Ombudsman Program. She is currently a special assistant to the director of human capital and the diversity manager for Marshall, as well as an ombudsman. Susan has a B.A. from the University of Alabama and a J.D. from Cumberland School of Law, Samford University.



NASA SHARED SERVICES CENTER (NSSC)

James C. Barnett

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Jim Barnett has been with the NSSC Business and Administration Office since 2006, where he served as lead for institutional services and is currently the appointed industrial property officer for NSSC Agency-wide contracts. His background has been in Center operations including construction, facility management, and safety. As a mechanical engineer, he came to Stennis Space Center in 2001 from the Navy's Gulf Coast Construction Office. Earlier in his 30-year Government career, he served as a naval officer and performed various civil service supervisory and management roles. James joined the NASA Ombudsman Program in 2012.



STENNIS SPACE CENTER (SSC)

Karen Lee Vander

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Karen Vander has been with NASA for 21 years and is lead for the Safety, Quality, and Management Systems Division in the Office of Safety and Mission Assurance at SSC, where she also serves as the mishap and close calls program manager. She has worked as a test operations engineer on several rocket propulsion test projects, such as the Space Shuttle main engine (SSME) and 250K hybrid rocket motor. She also has worked as a systems engineer on several construction projects. Karen has been the SSC ombudsman for more than 8 years. She also recently retired from the U.S. Air Force Reserve with 23 years of service.

