Candidate Name

Anthony Keen-Louie, Certified Organizational Ombuds

Candidate Title

Associate Ombuds

Organization

University of California, San Diego

Candidate Statement

IOA has been central to my growth as an ombuds. Its training, conferences, and certification process have shaped my practice, and contributing to its work—from reviewing Annual Conference proposals and co-writing the Ombuds Day article to the Advocacy Committee's interim and temporary appointments guidance—has shown me how much the association can do when members' expertise becomes shared resources. I want to serve on the Board to give back and to help more members find that same community and purpose.

As a newer ombuds who has helped restart one office and strengthen another, I understand the realities of small offices, transitions, and early-career practitioners. I also bring nearly 20 years of association volunteer leadership, including board service, conference planning, fundraising, and building identity-based communities within a large national association. My connections across the dispute resolution field—through the ABA, the National Conflict Resolution Center, and USC Gould—could help IOA build partnerships and raise the profession's visibility.

I approach Board service the way I approach ombuds work: listening carefully, staying curious, honoring many perspectives, and helping groups find solutions they can own. I would be honored to serve IOA's members in this role.

Pathway to the Profession

One of the most important challenges ahead is the stability of ombuds offices. Offices are being created, restarted, consolidated, and downsized under budget pressure, and retirements, leaves, and turnover can leave them without coverage. Each transition puts at risk the trust, independence, and continuity that make an ombuds office valuable.

I have seen this from several angles. At UC Santa Cruz, I was the first Associate Ombuds when the office restarted. At UC San Diego, I am helping strengthen operations and rebuild campus partnerships. On the Advocacy Committee, I helped develop IOA's Guidance on Interim and Temporary Ombuds Appointments, which helps organizations choose the right type of appointment, protect the office's independence, plan coverage for solo offices, and move promptly toward permanent appointments.

IOA can be the first place organizations turn during these transitions, building on its existing resources for starting and sustaining offices with more transition guidance and shareable reporting models. Transitions are also where many practitioners enter the field, so IOA can keep strengthening pathways in

through mentorship, internships, certification, and outreach to adjacent fields. I came to ombuds work from student affairs and mediation, and previously as a mediation instructor at USC Gould, where I have spoken with students about ombuds careers.

I would bring the perspective of a newer ombuds with long association experience—someone who has helped rebuild an office and remembers what it takes to find a way into this field.

IOA Values

Much of my career has focused on making sure every member of a community can find belonging and a voice—something that requires action to occur. I was the inaugural coordinator of San Diego State's Pride Center, and I co-chaired UC San Diego's Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation Issues and its Supporting Student Parents Workgroup. At NASPA, I spent four years on the Region VI Advisory Board coordinating identity- and interest-based Knowledge Communities. I would help the Board build on what IOA already does well—the Mentoring Program, Community Connections, the Regional Advancement Communities, and the DEIAB Committee—in support of the Strategic Direction's goal of a culture of inclusion and belonging:

Many doors in, all leading somewhere. Members connect through identity, sector, region, career stage, and office type. Building on the Regional Advancement Communities model, the Board can support communities around other shared identities and settings, each with a clear line to committee and Board work.

Pair people up, at every stage. The Mentoring Program supports ombuds in their first two years. In "Are You Ready for Ombuds Day 2024?", my co-author and I encouraged ombuds to find an "Ombuddy" for accountability and support—peer pairing that could extend to members beyond their early years. Combined with short-term, well-defined volunteer roles, this helps members move from welcome to contribution.

Ask who isn't in the room. That article also urged ombuds to notice which parts of their organization never send visitors. The Board can apply the same lens to engagement, identifying the sectors, regions, and communities it hears from least.

Access across time zones, budgets, and settings. I would help continue IOA's virtual and on-demand offerings, rotate meeting times across regions, and pay particular attention to solo and small offices—I know from working in a two-person office how isolating that can be.

Listen, then show what changed. Members feel valued when they see their input acted on.

Members experience value when IOA helps them do the work and defend it: standards, certification, peer support, and practical guidance they can share with decision-makers.

Volunteer or Leadership Experience

I have held volunteer leadership roles for nearly two decades.

Within IOA and the dispute resolution field:

IOA Advocacy Committee (2025–present): Helped develop IOA's Guidance on Interim and Temporary Ombuds Appointments (2026), which helps organizations maintain ombuds services and protect independence through leadership transitions, leaves, pilot programs, and budget constraints.

IOA Annual Conference Program Proposal Reviewer (2025, 2027).

IOA blog: Co-wrote "Are You Ready for Ombuds Day 2024?" with Lana Smith-Hale, offering outreach and visibility strategies for ombuds.

American Bar Association Dispute Resolution Section 2027 Annual Conference Committee (2026–present).

University of California Ombuds All-Hands Meeting Committee (2023): Helped organize the systemwide gathering at UC Santa Barbara.

Inaugural Director, MC3 Mediator Certification (2023): Led outreach and operations for a new nonprofit certification body and helped developed relationships with organizations around the country.

Southern California Mediation Association: Attorney Outreach Committee (2021–2022); Annual Conference Planning Committee (2023).

In other organizations:

NASPA Region VI Advisory Board (2014–2020): As Knowledge Community Co-Coordinator, helped oversee 28 regional representatives and launch a Knowledge Community for undocumented students; later served as NASPA Foundation Ambassador. Also served on three Regional Conference Planning Committees.

UC San Diego Staff Association Board (2018–2022): Elected, then appointed to oversee initiative tracking and assessment; led a reorganization into functional chair roles.

Other Highlights: Co-Chair, UC San Diego Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation Issues; UC San Diego Supporting Student Parents Workgroup; SDSU LGBTQ Advisory Board.

These roles taught me what makes boards work: clear structure, shared accountability, follow-through, and decisions made with the full membership in mind.

Professional Expertise

I bring experience in all four areas the Committee identified:

Business development/fundraising: As a NASPA Foundation Ambassador, I worked toward regional donor and giving goals; at San Diego State, I assisted with donor cultivation planning for LGBTQ initiatives. I have managed budgets of 150,000–200,000, and my business administration degree grounds my understanding of sustainable revenue.

Strategic partnerships: As MC3's inaugural Director, I worked with education alliance partners to advance its mission. Every student affairs role I held required building relationships and coalitions across campus and beyond, and ombuds work depends on the same connections to serve visitors and explain our role.

My ABA conference committee work also connects me with a natural IOA partner. I would welcome the chance to build partnerships on IOA's behalf.

Marketing: I co-wrote IOA's Ombuds Day 2024 article on practical visibility strategies. On campus, I led the creation of new office logos and outreach materials at UC Santa Cruz and UC San Diego, managed a website platform transition, and led the outreach needed to re-establish an ombuds office on campus.

Research and resource development: I helped develop IOA's interim and temporary appointments guidance, developed IOA SOP-aligned confidential tracking processes at UCSD and UCSC, compiled UC Santa Cruz's first ombuds annual reports, and presented assessment research on graduate students and families at the NASPA Annual Conference.

Together, these skills could help IOA deepen partnerships with allied organizations, tell the profession's story more clearly, and turn member expertise into resources organizations can use.

Candidate Bio

I am a Certified Organizational Ombuds (IOA, 2026) with three years of ombuds practice at large public research universities and more than 15 years in higher education.

Associate Ombuds, Office of the Ombuds, University of California San Diego —San Diego, CA; June 2026–present. I serve faculty, staff, students, postdoctoral trainees, and UC San Diego Health employees (at least a quarter of my visitors), and advise on aligning office operations with the IOA Standards of Practice.

Associate Ombuds (Inaugural), Office of the Ombuds, University of California Santa Cruz — Higher education; Santa Cruz, CA; August 2023–May 2026. I was the first Associate Ombuds when the office restarted after more than a decade without one. In a two-person office, I developed an IOA-aligned confidential tracking process with the University Ombuds, compiled the office's first annual reports, and led outreach and training.

Adjunct Professor/Lecturer, USC Gould School of Law — Legal education; Los Angeles, CA; Fall 2023, Fall 2024. Co-taught "Mediation: Theory and Practice."

Trainer, Group Format Mediator & Volunteer Community Mediator, National Conflict Resolution Center — Nonprofit; San Diego, CA; 2020–present.

Inaugural Director, MC3 Mediator Certification — Nonprofit; 2023.

Previously, I spent more than 15 years in student affairs: UC San Diego (2015–2023), San Diego State University, Columbia University, UC Santa Barbara, and Fordham University. I hold a Master of Dispute Resolution (USC Gould School of Law), an M.A. in Higher Education (NYU), and a B.S. in Business Administration (UC Riverside).