Candidate Name

Dennis Jones

Candidate Title

Faculty Ombuds

Organization

Tarleton State University

Candidate Statement

I am passionate about serving on the IOA Board of Directors because I deeply believe in the IOA's mission and values, as well as in the transformative potential of the organizational ombuds role. Throughout my career as a Faculty Ombuds and in academic and community leadership roles, I have witnessed the positive impact that skilled and ethical ombuds professionals can have on inclusivity, fairness, and constructive dialogue within organizations.

The IOA represents a global community striving to promote ethical standards, advance best practices, and increase the visibility and value of the ombuds profession. I am excited about the prospect of contributing my skills in governance, strategic partnership, innovation, and member engagement to support IOA's strategic direction. Serving on the Board would allow me to advocate for initiatives that foster inclusion, expand member value, and enhance the profession's visibility in a changing world.

I am also committed to listening to and amplifying member voices, closing the gap between leadership and the broader membership, and ensuring that IOA continues to thrive as a global, inclusive, and forward-looking association. I would be honored to collaborate with Board colleagues to help IOA meet current challenges and seize future opportunities for the profession and our members.

In practical terms, I have discussed this opportunity with my University's Provost. The provost's office has committed to providing me with the resources (e.g., time & money) to serve on the Board.

Pathway to the Profession

Looking ahead over the next five years, one of the most important opportunities and challenges for IOA and the broader organizational ombuds profession will be to demonstrate and elevate the value of the ombuds function in a rapidly changing organizational and global context. This includes effectively advocating for the ombuds role amid evolving expectations around workplace equity, inclusion, and psychological safety, as well as navigating the growing integration of technology and data-driven practices.

From my experience as the inaugural Faculty Ombuds at Tarleton State University and as a leader in various nonprofit and community organizations, I have seen firsthand how organizational cultures are shifting and the critical need for trusted, confidential problem-solving resources. I have also engaged with technological advancement and data analytics in my faculty role and through my work on IOA's AI Working Group. These experiences shape my perspective that IOA must both champion the core

principles of independence, impartiality, informality, and confidentiality, while embracing innovation—including responsible use of technology and research—to serve members and stakeholders effectively.

I will bring to the Board a commitment to data-driven decision-making and strategic advocacy for the profession, helping IOA ensure it is prepared for new challenges and opportunities—whether that means addressing new workplace norms, leveraging AI and analytics for service delivery, or expanding partnerships across sectors. By listening to members, translating insights into action, and continuously promoting the value and impact of the ombuds role, I am prepared to help IOA lead the profession through this pivotal period of change and opportunity.

IOA Values

The strength of IOA comes from our intersectional diversity—in identity, profession, geography, and lived experience. This allows the organization to thrive when every practitioner—regardless of geography, sector, or identity—can both contribute to and benefit from the collective expertise of the ombuds community. The Board must provide strategic leadership and stewardship of inclusive processes that let members co-create value.

Engaging Broad Membership & Creating Meaningful Opportunities

1. Targeted Communities of Practice (COPs) => Formalize sector-specific COPs (e.g., Corporate, Higher Ed, Government, NGOs) with Board liaisons who funnel insights into strategy. Support intersectional affinity groups—e.g., Ombuds of Color, LGBTQ+ Ombuds, Early-Career Ombuds.

2. Inclusive Leadership Pathways => Create a transparent “Path to Leadership” roadmap: clear steps to serve on committees, task forces, or the Board; pair newcomers with mentors. Implement term-limited “Emerging Leader” Board observer seats (non-voting) to give early-career practitioners exposure and voice.

3. Member Listening Initiatives => Regularly convene focus groups, surveys, or “town hall” discussions to learn directly from underrepresented or emerging member segments. Highlight how feedback is acted on.

Ensuring Members Feel Valued & Experience Value

Feeling valued is core to an engaged and thriving membership.

1. Transparency & Communication => Maintain transparent Board communications about IOA strategy, finances, and decision-making in ways that are relevant to different members' needs and contexts.

2. Personalized Member Benefits => Tailor resources (webinars, toolkits, events) to various career stages, sectors, and geographic needs. Promote these benefits clearly.

3. Recognition Programs => Regularly recognize member achievements, volunteer contributions, or innovative practice in multiple formats (e-newsletters, awards, social media).

4. Feedback Loop => Close the loop with members by reporting on how member feedback has influenced association actions or offerings.

5. Accessible Support => Ensure all members know how to get help, connect with IOA leaders, and access resources. Consider a “concierge” or ambassador program for new/joining members.

Volunteer or Leadership Experience

Within IOA, I have served on the Research and Assessment Committee and on its AI Working Group. Also, I co-presented a webinar in January 2025 and a session at the annual conference in April 2025. I am currently preparing to co-present a webinar in December 2026 and reviewing proposals for the 2027 conference.

In my faculty role, I have served on numerous university, college, and departmental-level committees/councils/task forces. Currently, I am a member of the university’s AI Council and the Human + AI Futures (HAF) Task Force. Recently, I co-chaired the university’s reaffirmation team for reaccreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (now the Commission on Colleges and Universities). Previously, I chaired the Athletic Council and co-chaired the First Year Experience Committee.

Outside of IOA and the university, I serve on the Board of Directors of the Stephenville Optimist Club and just completed my term as Club President. Previously, I served on the City of Stephenville Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

Professional Expertise

-Business development/revenue generation experience (i.e., fundraising)

For the past 55 years, the Stephenville Optimist Club has held an annual auction to raise funds for youth activities. Last year, as Club President, I chaired the auction committee that raised $20,000 to purchase school supplies for youth in the area.

- Strategic partnership experience (i.e., sponsorship partnerships, collaborative partnership development, cultivating association, or other organization partnerships)

As part of the Stephenville Optimist Club, the Board establishes partnerships with various nonprofits and schools. Last year, the school supply project was conducted in partnership with the local United Way. This year, the Club is partnering with local school districts to establish Junior Optimist International (JOI) organizations in local schools.

- Marketing background

As a faculty member in a business school, I emphasize various aspects of marketing in all courses. This semester, my course focuses on business analytics. Several of the examples in this course involve analyzing marketing data.

Also, many years ago, I worked as a Sales Engineer for a small manufacturing firm in Detroit, MI. This role provided me with hands-on experience developing, implementing, and evaluating a marketing plan.

- Research experience

As a faculty member, I conduct research and present and publish the results. As a senior faculty member, I mentor new faculty members and graduate students on the research process. I have previously served on dissertation and thesis committees.

-Which of these areas, or what other relevant expertise would you bring to the Board? How could your experiences/skills contribute to IOA's strategic direction and the work of the Board?

I bring expertise in several areas that align with IOA's strategic direction and the Board's needs. My experience in both organizational leadership and governance—serving as a current Board member and past President of the Stephenville Optimist Club, as well as on advisory boards—has equipped me with skills in strategic decision-making, fiscal oversight, partnership development, and member engagement. These are directly transferable to supporting IOA's governance, resource development, and outreach objectives.

My business background—emphasizing marketing, analytics, and business development in both academia and industry—prepares me to contribute to IOA's efforts in business development, revenue generation, and promoting the value of IOA membership. Chairing the annual fundraising auction for the Optimist Club and developing strategic partnerships with community organizations demonstrate my ability to cultivate sponsorships and collaborative partnerships.

My scholarship as a professor and my service on IOA's Research & Assessment Committee underscore my commitment to evidence-based practice and innovation. I will champion data-driven decision-making, help translate research into practitioner-friendly resources, and explore responsible AI tools that enhance member services and operational efficiency.

These collective experiences position me to support IOA's strategic plan in several ways: enhancing member value through evidence-driven initiatives, expanding resource and partnership networks, elevating the visibility of ombuds practice, and ensuring the Board effectively represents a broad and diverse membership. I am committed to leveraging these skills to help IOA thrive as a global, inclusive, and future-ready association.

Candidate Bio

I am beginning my fourth year as the inaugural Faculty Ombuds at Tarleton State University. The Faculty Ombuds office is located on the University's main campus in Stephenville, Texas. However, I also serve faculty at off-campus instructional sites in Bryan, Fort Worth, and Waco.

This is a collateral-duty role as I continue to serve as a Professor of Computer Information Systems in the Dr. Sam Pack College of Business, where I remain actively engaged in teaching, research, and service. During my career, I also served as the Dean of General Studies (University College) for eight years.

Prior to joining the Tarleton faculty, I worked in student affairs roles at Marquette University (Milwaukee, WI) and Michigan State University (East Lansing, MI). In these student affairs roles, I was involved in facilitative mediation and trained student leaders in facilitative mediation strategies.