Candidate Name

Mordekai Ongo

Candidate Title

Ombudsperson

Organization

Andrews University

Candidate Statement

I am interested in serving on the International Ombuds Association (IOA) Board of Directors because I believe in the vital role of organizational ombuds in promoting fairness, trust, confidentiality, and constructive conflict resolution within organizations. I see this opportunity as a way to contribute my leadership experience, research background, technical expertise, and commitment to ethical practice to help advance IOA's mission and strengthen its impact globally.

Throughout my professional and service experiences, I have developed a strong appreciation for collaboration, strategic partnerships, capacity building, and responsible leadership. My service as Secretary of the Adventist Human-Subjects Researchers Association (AHSRA) from 2015 to 2022 and Treasurer from 2022 to the present has provided opportunities to contribute to organizational governance, strategic planning, and the advancement of an international professional community. My involvement in research networks and ethics training has also strengthened my commitment to integrity, accountability, and the responsible application of knowledge.

I am particularly interested in helping IOA respond to emerging challenges, including the growing influence of artificial intelligence, evolving expectations around confidentiality and data privacy, and the need to maintain trust in increasingly complex organizational environments. My background in software engineering, combined with my experience in human subjects research and ethics training, would allow me to bring a multidisciplinary perspective to the Board's discussions and strategic decisions.

Beyond these areas, I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to strengthening partnerships, expanding professional development opportunities, supporting fundraising and outreach initiatives, and increasing awareness of the value of organizational ombuds services. I believe that IOA's continued growth depends on inclusive leadership, global collaboration, and a willingness to anticipate emerging needs while remaining grounded in the principles of independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and informality.

If elected, I would bring a collaborative spirit, a commitment to service, and a willingness to learn from and work alongside fellow Board members and the wider IOA community. I view Board service not simply as a leadership opportunity, but as a responsibility to listen, contribute thoughtfully, and help position IOA to serve its members and the broader ombuds profession effectively in the years ahead.

Pathway to the Profession

Artificial intelligence (AI) is already creating challenges across many aspects of human life, and its rapid evolution is likely to make these challenges increasingly complex over the next five years. I anticipate that AI will have significant implications for organizational ombuds practice and the International Ombuds Association (IOA). As the Association navigates these emerging issues, I believe my experience and technical background would bring valuable perspectives to the Board's deliberations.

My work in human subjects research has exposed me to growing concerns about the ethical use of AI. I have conducted training in research ethics and AI-related issues while also learning from others and completing courses on AI. These experiences have strengthened my understanding of the opportunities and risks associated with AI and would inform my contribution to the Board's efforts to address its challenges.

At IOA, we must proactively consider issues such as confidentiality and data security, privacy protections, exaggerated or misleading claims generated by AI, human accountability for AI-assisted decisions, and the potential for AI to amplify existing organizational disruptions. Addressing these concerns will require thoughtful policies, ethical leadership, and a commitment to preserving the trust and integrity that are central to ombuds practice.

I would bring to the Board my experience in human subjects research, my involvement in ethics training, and my background in software engineering. Together, these experiences would enable me to contribute a multidisciplinary perspective to discussions on responsible AI adoption, risk mitigation, and the protection of the core principles of organizational ombuds work.

IOA Values

Clear vision, strong leadership, operational excellence, and an inclusive, empowering culture are key to IOA's continued success. While IOA already demonstrates these qualities, the Board can continue strengthening intentional inclusion, meaningful engagement, and tangible member value by:

Building connections across differences through peer networks, mentorship, and opportunities to learn across sectors, cultures, regions, and career stages.

Creating accessible pathways to participation through flexible opportunities for members to contribute, collaborate, and share their expertise.

Listening broadly and regularly to understand members' needs and ensure diverse and underrepresented voices are heard.

Modeling inclusive leadership by ensuring diverse perspectives inform Board discussions and decisions.

Recognizing meaningful contributions by creating opportunities for members to share their knowledge, experiences, and innovations.

Embracing innovation and AI by exploring how artificial intelligence may shape IOA's future and the evolving role of the ombudsperson.

Ultimately, the goal is to foster a community where every member feels seen, heard, valued, and connected—and experiences meaningful value from their IOA membership.

Volunteer or Leadership Experience

My experience in IOA, higher education, shared governance, community engagement, and faith-based leadership has prepared me to contribute effectively as a member of the IOA Board of Directors. I have been an IOA member since 2021, completed the Foundations course, conducted conflict resolution, facilitated campus training on communication, and presented at Faculty Institute on the role of the ombudsperson and IOA's principles and standards of practice.

Since 2022, I have served as Vice President of the Staff Senate, gaining valuable experience in governance, collaboration, and representing diverse stakeholder perspectives. I also drafted the University Ombuds Charter, which was approved, demonstrating my ability to turn ideas into meaningful institutional progress.

Beyond the university, I serve as a church elder and General Sabbath School Superintendent in a congregation of approximately 4,000 members. These roles have strengthened my leadership, communication, and community-building skills. I have also volunteered as a community campaign research strategist, helping build support for a School District Performing Arts Center that is now operational. In recognition of my contributions, I received the President's Excellence in Service Award.

I have served as an Executive Committee Officer of the Adventist Human-Subjects Researchers Association (AHSRA), an international association with members from around the world, first as Secretary from 2015 to 2022 and as Treasurer from 2022 to the present. I am also a founding member of the Global Institute for Research and Community Advancement (GIRCA), a collaborative research network, and a member of Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM). I am a member of the Society of Research Administrators International (SRAI), and currently taking certification courses.

Together, these experiences have prepared me to bring a collaborative, inclusive, and strategic perspective to the IOA Board. I would welcome the opportunity to apply my experience in governance, conflict resolution, advocacy, and service to strengthen IOA, engage its diverse membership, and advance the ombuds profession.

Professional Expertise

I have participated in numerous fundraising initiatives to support the construction of school buildings and churches, as well as provide financial assistance for students' education. I have also contributed to the development of strategic partnerships to facilitate projects, collaborative initiatives, and conferences.

In January 2026, I was part of a team that visited the Adventist School of Medicine of East-Central Africa (ASOME) in Kigali, Rwanda, to explore collaboration with the Rwandan government toward the acquisition of Kibagabaga Level Two Teaching Hospital. The itinerary included visits to King Faisal Hospital and Rwanda Military Referral and Teaching Hospital (RMRTH). As part of this initiative, I conducted ethics training and participated in meetings focused on advancing fundraising efforts to support the hospital's acquisition.

These experiences have strengthened my capacity to contribute to fundraising, marketing, strategic partnerships, and research. As a Director of IOA, I believe I could leverage these skills and experiences to advance the organization's mission, strengthen its partnerships, and support its strategic objectives.

Candidate Bio

I currently serve as University Ombudsperson at Andrews University, a higher education institution in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, a position I have held since 2021. In this role, I support constructive conflict resolution, facilitate communication, and promote fairness, impartiality, and transparency within the university community. During this period, I have also developed the University Ombuds Charter. Concurrently, since 2013, I have served as the Research Integrity & Compliance Officer at Andrews University, overseeing research ethics and regulatory compliance, including the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). My relevant professional experience also includes serving as Adjunct Faculty at Andrews University since 2020 and as a Research Associate on an NSF-funded study from 2007 to 2013. Earlier, I worked as Manager of Credit Control at Thabiti Finance Ltd in Kenya from 1991 to 1996, gaining experience in financial management, risk assessment, and organizational accountability. These roles collectively provide a strong foundation in organizational ombuds practice, institutional governance, ethical leadership, research compliance, and conflict resolution. Andrews University is recognized as one of the most diverse universities in the United States, holding the # 1 as the Most Diverse College in America.