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**MIT PROFESSOR AND FORMER MIT OMBUDS MARY P. ROWE  
NAMED 2026 TRAILBLAZER BY INTERNATIONAL OMBUDS ASSOCIATION**

**SEATTLE** (April 27, 2026) – MIT Sloan School of Management Professor and former MIT ombuds Dr. Mary P. Rowe has been awarded the 2026 Trailblazer Award from the International Ombuds Association (IOA). The Trailblazer Award is IOA’s highest honor and was presented at the organization’s conference earlier this month.

Rowe has been a member of MIT’s faculty since 1973, beginning as Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor for Women and Work. She later served as MIT’s organizational ombuds for nearly 42 years. For more than fifty years Rowe has helped generations of organizational ombuds understand the principles, nuances, and possibilities of the role. Rowe’s colleagues say she is perpetually and thoughtfully considering challenges, evaluating opportunities ahead and leading on how ombuds can articulate their value to their organizations. She is described as a tireless thinker, a relentless innovator, a brilliant scholar and a generous mentor whose influence on the profession will extend far beyond her lifetime.

Rowe has spoken widely and written numerous articles on integrated conflict management systems (ICMS) and organizational ombuds throughout her career. Her pioneering contributions to the ombuds field included efforts related to harassment and retaliation, and she authored MIT’s widely adopted Guide to Dealing with Harassment.

For several decades, Rowe has served as a resource for affinity groups, working with managers and senior leaders on hundreds of improvements to policies, procedures, and institutional structures at MIT. She co-founded the MIT Mediation Program, where she taught, and contributed to a related initiative that served as a precursor to the present-day Resources to Ease Friction and Stress (REFS) program.

“Without a doubt, Dr. Rowe has had a tremendous impact on the work of ombuds and paved the way for so many in the field,” said Jennifer Mahony, IOA president. “She has revolutionized how ombuds manage and respond to the politics and problems that arise on campuses, and her lifelong contributions to the profession and IOA are unmatched.”

“She is THE trailblazer for the organizational ombuds field,” added IOA Executive Director Ellen Miller.

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Rowe helped build the foundation of IOA as a founding member of the Corporate Ombuds Association and its first president. That organization later joined with the College Ombudsman Association to form IOA.

The IOA Trailblazer Award is presented to one member and recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the organizational ombuds field over an extended period of time. IOA members submit nominations for the award, and the recipient is selected by the IOA Board of Directors.

The International Ombuds Association (IOA) is the professional association committed to championing the value and benefit of organizational ombuds worldwide. Its members help organizations mitigate risk by creating a confidential and informal option for stakeholders to raise concerns, safely navigate conflict, and manage change. IOA provides professional development, networking, mentoring, resources for ombuds and technical assistance to organizations who wish to establish an ombuds program, and is the definer of the field through certification and ethical standards. Learn more at [www.ombudsassociation.org](http://www.ombudsassociation.org).

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