

NASA Ombudsman Program

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



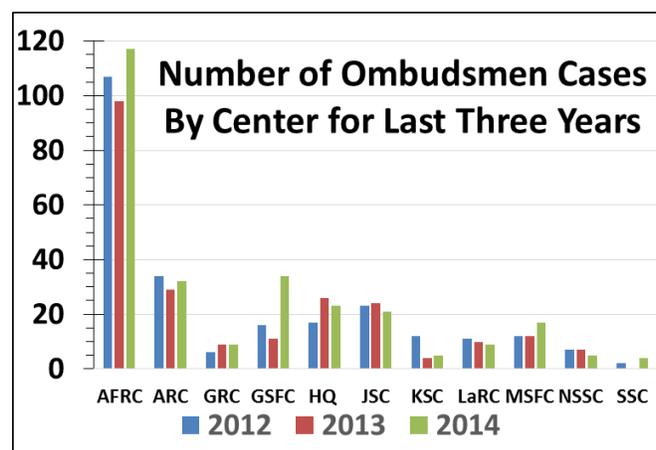
The Ten Year Anniversary of the NASA Ombudsman Program

Since 2004 the NASA Ombudsman Program has helped civil servants and contractor workforces resolve issues and concerns related to safety, mission success and organizational performance. Over this decade 51 different Ombudsmen have voluntarily served in the role and 2,741 people have brought issues. Ombudsmen have helped people be *heard* in a way not previously available, in a confidential manner outside of formal channels. In addition to resolving the concerns of individuals, in some cases, gaps in implementation of NASA policy have been identified and addressed. The Ombudsmen adhere to the following four principles.

- **Confidentiality** – Ombudsmen maintain complete confidentiality as to the identity of visitors, except as indicated in NPD 2025.1B, and at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman.
- **Neutrality** – Ombudsmen do not serve as a representative or advocate of any visitor’s concerns, however, the Ombudsmen do advocate for fair processes and administration.
- **Informality** – NASA’s Ombudsman Program functions outside all formal management, administrative or criminal processes. Ombudsmen do not serve as an agent of notice to NASA. The Ombudsmen assist visitors in accessing appropriate formal systems, offices or processes as needed.
- **Independence** – Ombudsmen are not encumbered by line management functions and in their Ombudsman role report to the Center Director.

A more detailed definition of these principles and how they apply to the Ombudsman Program can be found in NASA policy, NPD 2025.1B, NASA Ombudsman Program.

The majority of the cases over the years have been of an Organizational Performance nature (leadership, performance and relationships), while a much lower percentage have related to Mission Success or Safety concerns. Of all cases that come to the Ombudsmen, 20% get referred to formal resources at some point in the process. Most visitors receive coaching on how they might address the concerns themselves. Others ask the Ombudsman to get information for them or to help escalate the concern in some way.



In addition to addressing individual cases from visitors, the Ombudsman sometimes assists the organization to define team or organizational issues related to leadership, productivity or trust. In these cases, the Ombudsman isn't the first call for help. Their unique skills and perspective are requested to facilitate meetings or talk to individuals and/or groups in a confidential manner. The Centers value the ombudsman's ability to provide unfiltered information that can provide useful insights into issues and potential resolutions. The ombudsman can also validate that systemic changes have been effectively employed. These types of requests are usually proactive to try to avoid escalation of potential issues. In 2014, NASA Ombudsmen partook in this kind of activity upon the request of senior management and reported positive outcomes due to targeted coaching or restructuring.

Calvin F. Williams, Assistant Administrator for Strategic Infrastructure provides oversight of the Ombudsman Program.

2014 Highlights

- Efforts to increase visibility and awareness resulted in more visits and use of the Ombudsman Program. Case volume increased by 20% in 2014, primarily driven by increased activity at Armstrong Flight Research Center, Goddard Space Flight Center and Marshall Space Flight Center.
- Ombudsmen participated in Conflict Resolution Day activities in October 2014, an event to promote awareness of the many techniques available to resolve and manage conflict.
- Ombudsmen continued to share trends with NASA Center Directors, which influenced the implementation of best practices and contributed to a healthy and productive work environment.
- Through monthly meetings, coordinated by the Ombudsman Program Manager, Ombudsmen shared their issues and resolution methods, which communicated those methods across Centers.
- Continued efforts to reach out to the contractor community, which included participating in meetings between Center management and contractor representatives, such as Contractor Councils. In 2014 30% of all users of the Ombudsman Program were contractor personnel.
- Armstrong Flight Research Center assigned full time status to one of their five Ombudsman.

Case Examples and Trends

- About 13% of the cases in 2014 involved Safety or Mission Success.
- Concerns included:

Safety or Mission Success

- Qualifications of personnel with a role of inspection or audit
- Correctness of data or reports
- Employee alertness during work hours
- Adherence to safety procedures and tracking



- Appropriate use of NASA equipment and tools
- Maintenance procedures not being followed
- Consistent with prior years, in 2014 the majority of cases (87%) were categorized as Organizational Performance, which includes the topics of Interpersonal Conflict, Leadership Behavior and Policy or Procedures. Concerns included:

Interpersonal Conflict

- Lack of respect
- Job performance affecting co-workers
- Difference in work styles
- Work relationships between long-term employees and newer employees

Leadership Behavior

- Disagreement on perspective of a person's performance
- Lack of career development, feedback or coaching
- Bullying or unethical behavior
- Unclear or minimal communication

Policy or Procedures

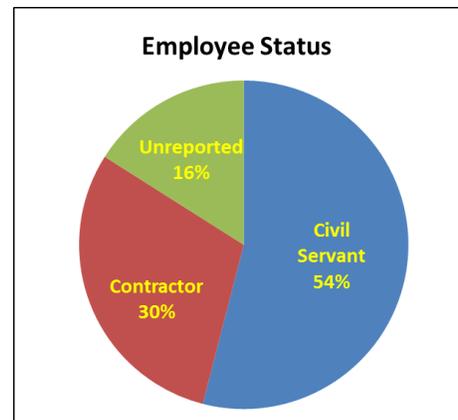
- Authorship/intellectual property issues
- Telework issues
- Office space
- Increase in workload without change in pay
- Perception of unfair promotion practices
- Job fit
- Workload issues
- Mistrust of Human Resources

- Contractor workforce issues were diverse and included relationships with supervisors, being asked to perform work that was inappropriate for the contractor personnel, work environment, harassment, socialization between civil servant and contractor personnel and consistency of non-renewal practices.

- Visitors to the Ombudsmen have indicated that the fear of retribution or perceived retribution has been an issue.

- 42% of all users of the Ombudsman Program were female.

This percentage is higher than the female representation in the agency, which is consistent with ombuds programs in other organizations.



What Was The Ombudsman Able to Do?

- Escalate issues to ensure the right people were involved in the decision-making.
- Coach individuals to communicate effectively about their own issues and concerns.
- Help individuals identify the right formal resources to go to for help.
- Research the situations and provide information to the individual.
- Bring parties together and facilitate discussions.
- Seek assistance from program managers of formal programs to review policies and practices that might be driving undesirable actions.
- Draw attention to policies that are not being followed.
- Encourage organization to enhance or realign resources when necessary.
- Provide reality testing to help the visitor discern the validity of their perceptions of a situation, which can help select an effective course of action for resolution.

List of Formal Resources

NASA strives to provide multiple options for dispute resolution. It is normally best for issues to be resolved by the personnel that are closest to the situation. If escalation is needed, the Ombudsman steers visitors toward formal, “on the record” options, such as:

- The immediate supervisor
- Office or Division Manager
- Employee Relations Office (formal investigation and consultation on work related issues)
- Employee Assistance Program (personal issues of wellness, stress, etc.)
- Ethics Office (business ethics and integrity issues)
- Equal Employment Office and Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Human Resource (Human Resource policy issues, performance, job status and treatment issues)
- Office of Security and Program Protection
- Office of Safety and Mission Assurance
- Office of Inspector General

The Ombudsman Program is the only NASA program for an “off the record” informal option.

Special Thanks To:

These Ombudsmen have completed their terms.

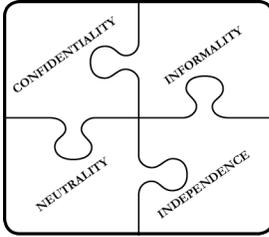
Michael Zernic - GRC

Rex Elliott - HQ

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Rolla Brown – LaRC



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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 for many who advanced to the highest ranks of leadership, management, and research in NASA.



AMES RESEARCH CENTER (ARC)

Jack Boyd

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Jack Boyd serves as the Senior Advisor to the Center Director, the Senior Advisor for History, and the 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 unpowered 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 executive assistant to the Ames Center Director, Deputy Director of Armstrong Flight Research Center, Deputy and Associate Director of ARC, and Associate Administrator for Management at NASA Headquarters.



ARMSTRONG FLIGHT RESEARCH CENTER (AFRC)

Louise Boyd

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As the Assistant Associate Director at AFRC, Louise Boyd has been employed by NASA for over 30 years. The first 21 years were spent at Kennedy Space Center, where she participated in various assignments that ranged from software engineering to workforce planning and human resources management. She also represented the Agency on a detail in the Executive Office of the President/Office of Management and Budget, Science and Space Programs Branch. In 2004, she transferred to Dryden Flight Research Center. Her assignments have included human resource management, strategic workforce planning, and performance improvement. She has been an ombudsman for 5 years. She is passionate about helping others succeed. She has served as an informal and formal mentor most of her NASA career.



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Albion Bowers

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Al Bowers is the Associate Director of Research in the Research and Engineering Directorate at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards, CA. In this position, Al is responsible for defining NASA Armstrong's strategic direction for the Center, including advanced aeronautical designs, research, and space technologies. Prior to his present position, Al served as Director of Dryden's Aeronautics Mission Directorate and as a project manager. He also served as the Chief of the Aerodynamics Branch of AFRC'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 the special assistant to the Associate Administrator of Aeronautics in 2008. Al earned a B.S. in aeronautical engineering and an M.Eng. from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. He began his career with NASA in the Graduate Student Research Program in 1982.



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George Grimshaw

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George Grimshaw has been a NASA employee at AFRC for over 29 years and an ombudsman for 4 years. He is currently a project analyst in the Operations Engineering Branch. Prior to that, he was the Shuttle Operations and Project Manager and led Space Shuttle landing and post-landing processing support at the Center. George was also the Avionics Branch Chief at Dryden for 8 years, leading the avionics technician workforce in the maintenance and modification of the Center's aircraft fleet. He began his career at AFRC as an avionics technician in 1984. According to George, the role of an ombudsman is important for NASA because it provides employees with a great resource when they don't know exactly to whom they should turn when workplace issues arise.



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Kevin Reilly

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Kevin Reilly has been employed 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 over 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 Dryden, 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 the Center 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 Center's ombudsman team in June 2010.



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Keith Williams

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Keith Williams has been employed by NASA for 7 years. Prior to this, he was employed by Honeywell Technical Services and assigned to various military and NASA contract management roles. In 2001, Keith retired from Honeywell and came to work at Dryden as a support contractor assigned to the Management Systems Office (MSO). In May 2006, he began his NASA career at Dryden as the supervisor of the MSO, responsible for ensuring management system (MS) integration, evaluation of MS system performance, and management of the Dryden MS documentation system. Keith has been an ombudsman for 5 years, serving as the Center's lead ombudsman.



GLENN RESEARCH CENTER (GRC)

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Marsha Nall has been employed by NASA Glenn Research Center for over 30 years and joined the ombudsman team last year. She currently manages the Glenn Human Research Program (HRP) and is responsible for the implementation of an interdisciplinary bioengineering program. This is a complex and unique space exploration research and technology development program focused on mitigating risks to the health, safety, and performance of astronaut crews during long-duration space flight. The GRC focus is in the areas of 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 the development of the International Space Station (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)

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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 University, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville.



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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 supermassive black holes. Kim previously served as the Associate Director of Science for the Goddard Space Flight Center Astrophysics Division, a program scientist at NASA Headquarters for the Spitzer Space Telescope, and the 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 on internal and cross-discipline communications strategy issues. Kim is also an occasional media spokesperson for NASA.



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Torry Johnson

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Torry A. Johnson has been with NASA for over 10 years and has been an ombudsman for a year. Torry currently functions as the Assistant Deputy Director of Hydrospheric and Biospheric Sciences in the Earth Science Division at Goddard Space Flight Center. In addition, he heads the Agency’s Tribal College and University Project.



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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. Prior to her current position, Joyce served as NASA’s Assistant Administrator for Education, directing the development and implementation of the Agency’s education programs that strengthen student involvement in and public awareness of its scientific goals and missions. Joyce earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees 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, the 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 over 25 years, initially as a contractor and converting to civil service in 2008. She started her career at ARC, working on life science research and overseeing space flight experiments. She relocated to KSC 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 included program management, aligning budget to goals, improving data collection and reporting, communicating effectively with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) 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.



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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' experience working at different Federal Government entities. Before joining NASA, John worked as an audit manager at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), where he earned multiple awards for his contributions 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 has an M.S. in finance from Johns Hopkins's Carey Business School. John is also a certified public accountant.



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Ruth McWilliams

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Ruth McWilliams has been with NASA for 9 years and served as an ombudsman for over 3 years. She developed a comprehensive Headquarters outreach program to ensure that employees were aware of the Ombudsman Program. She currently serves as the Executive Officer to the NASA Chief Information Officer and previously served as Executive Officer to the Associate Deputy Administrator for Strategy and Policy. Ruth led the team that revised NPD 1000.5, Policy for NASA Acquisition, and revitalized the Headquarters Detailee Program, for which she received an Agency Honor Award. She has previously served as the Mission Support Council (MSC) Executive Secretary and a Program Analysis and Evaluation Office (PA&E) program analyst.



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Brenda Mulac is 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 6 years as a civil servant after spending 3.5 years as a contractor at Wallops Flight Facility. Before joining ARMD, Brenda served as the NASA Liaison to the Federal Aviation Administration's (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 uncrewed aircraft. Brenda holds a B.S and an M.S. in metallurgical and materials engineering from Michigan Technological University and the Colorado School of Mines, respectively, and an M.S. in atmospheric science from the University of Colorado.



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Donna Blackshear-Reynolds is the Division Chief of the Multiprograms Division under the Johnson Space Center Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Donna began at JSC in 1981 as a Presidential Management Intern and has served in progressively more responsible positions involved in 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 M.P.A. from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and postgraduate study in public policy at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance.



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Craig Dinsmore

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Craig Dinsmore received his bachelor of science and master's degrees in mechanical engineering from Rice University. He later received a master of science degree in environmental management from the University of Houston–Clear Lake, as well as a master's degree in space systems engineering from the Stevens Institute of Technology. Craig joined the NASA JSC community in 1982 and, after working for several support contractors, became a civil servant in 1988. He now serves as Associate Division Chief in the Crew and Thermal Systems Division in the Engineering Directorate. While at NASA, Craig has served in progressively more responsible leadership and branch supervisory positions in the areas of test operations safety, spacesuit systems, management integration, and thermal control systems. He completed a yearlong assignment at NASA Headquarters in program analysis and evaluation and is a recipient of the NASA Exceptional Achievement Medal. Craig currently serves on various engineering, JSC, and NASA-wide teams for technology roadmapping, spacecraft systems maturation, and technical discipline advancement.



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Hortense Diggs is currently the teacher and student programs lead within the External Relations Directorate's Education Programs and University Research Division at NASA's John F. Kennedy Space Center in Florida. In 2000, Burt joined NASA 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. In 1992, she was promoted to the position of program safety manager and lead engineer for all Delta launches from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.



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Justin is currently the civil engineering lead within the Construction of Facilities Division of the Center Operations Directorate at KSC in Florida. In 2000, Junod 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.



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 United States 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 HTT in 1995 and is still located there. He enjoys the diverse workforce and the dedicated people who work at LaRC.



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 over 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, and diversity workforce manager and is currently the LaRC Supply and Equipment Management Officer as well as the Center's Property Disposal Officer. Venita considers herself fortunate to have enjoyed such a diversified and fulfilling career with NASA and has enjoyed her first year as an ombudsman.



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 servant job with the Department of Defense in Norfolk, VA, where she was a contract management assistant. She transferred to NASA 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 (COR) for the Science Support Services Contract. Shannon enjoys working with people and has served as an ombudsman for a little over a year.



MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (MSFC)

Pamela Caruso

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Pam Caruso has over 30 years' experience in the space and missile defense community and worked at the Department of Defense prior to joining NASA. She currently supports the Engineering Director as lead for engineering partnerships. She has a B.S. from the University of Alabama in chemical engineering and an M.S. from the University of Alabama in Huntsville in engineering. Pam has served as an ombudsman for 3 years.



MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (MSFC)

Susan Cloud

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Susan Cloud has over 33 years with NASA and 8 years with the Ombudsman Program. She currently is 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)

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Jim Barnett has been with the NSSC Business and Administration Office since 2006, where he served as the lead for institutional services and is currently the appointed industrial property officer for the 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.



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Karen Vander has been with NASA for 21 years and is the lead of the Safety, Quality, and Management Systems Division in the Office of Safety and Mission at Stennis Space Center, where she also serves as the Mishap and Close Calls Program Manager for SSC. 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 has also worked as a systems engineer on several construction projects. Karen has been the SSC ombudsman for over 8 years. She has also recently retired from the United States Air Force Reserve with 23 years of service.