Mary P. Rowe Research and Publications Biography

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Part I:

Mary P. Rowe Biographical Summary

Mary P. Rowe was hired as Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor for Women and Work when she came to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1973. Her title was changed in 1980 to Special Assistant to the President and Ombudsperson at MIT. She practiced for almost 42 years as an organizational ombuds reporting directly to five presidents of MIT. Since 1985, she has also been Adjunct Professor of Negotiation and Conflict Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Since late 2014, Rowe has continued research and writing at the MIT Institute for Work and Employment Research at Sloan.

Rowe earned a BA from Swarthmore College and a PhD in economics from Columbia University. Before coming to MIT, she worked at Abt Associates for several years as a child care economist.

In February 1973, MIT President Jerome B. Wiesner and Chancellor Paul E. Gray appointed Rowe to a newly created position reporting directly to them—Special Assistant to the President and the Chancellor for Women and Work. The 1973 MIT News Office appointment announcement stated:

"As assistant to President Jerome B. Wiesner and Chancellor Paul E. Gray, Dr. Rowe will be involved in the Institute's efforts to move forth through affirmative action toward equality of opportunity in employment and education for women, and to improve the quality of life for women associated with MIT."

In 1974, Wiesner and Gray established the counterpart position of Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor for Minority Affairs and appointed Dr. Clarence G. Williams.

Notably, from their first days as Special Assistants, Rowe and Williams each saw men and women, of every background, with every kind of workplace concern. In

1980, in recognition of this work, MIT President Paul Gray established the Ombudsperson Office and named Rowe and Williams as MIT's first ombudspersons.

Rowe served with Williams under Presidents Wiesner and Gray—and then with Ombudspersons Thomas P. Zgambo (for several years) and Toni Robinson (for 23 years) under Presidents Charles M. Vest, Susan Hockfield, and L. Rafael Reif.

As a conflict management specialist and an expert in interpersonal negotiations, Rowe heard from hundreds of women and men a year about serious conflicts and concerns. In 1973, she coined the term "micro-inequities," building on Professor Chester Pierce's seminal work in 1970 on micro-aggressions—originally described by Pierce as micro, aggressive, racist acts. Rowe sought an additional term, "micro-inequities," in order to include *all* micro acts of unfair behavior of every kind—including those caused by unconscious bias, negligence and ignorance, and even accidents—together with micro-aggressions. As she worked to understand how to block and remediate micro-inequities, Rowe came up with the concept of "micro-affirmations" to include all genuine, helpful micro-behaviors that help to support others.

Beginning in 1973, she wrote many internal reports about harassment, micro-inequities, micro-affirmations, and other diversity issues. Her first-year reports to the President, Academic Council, and other Institute committees resulted, in December 1973, in President Wiesner's specifying what would be one of the nation's first policies addressing harassment. His early formulation addressed all forms of harassment, in a statement that began with the words: "Harassment of any kind is not acceptable at MIT; it is antithetical to the mission of a research university." Wiesner's statement was notable not only for being new but also because it presciently included forms of behavior now called bullying.

Rowe's work at MIT with major theorists about systems thinking inspired her to apply systems thinking to her own work. In the 1970s and 1980s, she spoke widely—and wrote many articles—about "integrated conflict management systems" (ICMS), including several of the nation's earliest articles about such systems.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Rowe listened to and worked with approximately 100 informal affinity groups at MIT. She helped them propose more than 600 small and large changes in policies, procedures, and structures at MIT. Over the years, because of cases in the office and the work of affinity groups, Rowe was able to help MIT establish policies about harassment, conflicts of interest, employment of members of the same family or of domestic partners, personal work required by

supervisors, academic integrity, sexual orientation, and violence in the workplace. She worked with senior officers and department heads, encouraging many gender-and-race-equitable practices. These included policies to foster salary and pension equity; equitable procedures for recruitment and promotion; several policies and practices to support "work and family"; many improvements in graduate student advising; mentoring frameworks; and dispute resolution.

She began decades of writing about inequities, micro-affirmations, mentoring, academic support structures, and support for bystanders to promote diversity and inclusion. She consults widely to corporations, academic institutions, government agencies, and international and multinational organizations.

Rowe's research interests include all the various forms of personal power in interpersonal negotiations; conflict management system design; and coping with difficult people. She has been especially interested in the roles of bystanders and the "bystanders of bystanders" in preventing and dealing with unacceptable and harmful behavior and helping to affirm professional and productive behavior within organizations. Some of her recent articles discuss what managers can do to be perceived as *receptive* to bystanders in organizations and communities; a micro-affirmations research agenda; promoting equity in organizations; and assessing the value to society of the profession of organizational ombuds.

From 1973 through 1975, Rowe co-developed and taught an MIT seminar course on Androgyny. She helped MIT librarian David Ferriero develop the Men's Studies and Women's Studies Collections in the MIT Libraries. In the early 1980s, she helped to develop and co-taught a course on HIV/AIDS in the MIT Biology Department with Professor David Baltimore. As Adjunct Professor in the MIT Sloan School of Management, beginning in 1985, Rowe taught a new course, Negotiation and Conflict Management. Since leaving the MIT Ombuds Office in late 2014, Rowe has continued her research at MIT Sloan.

In 1982, Rowe was a co-founder (and then the first president and a long-term Board member) of the Corporate Ombudsman Association, later re-incorporated as The Ombudsman Association (TOA). With many others, she taught Ombudsman 101, 202, 303, and other courses offered by The Ombudsman Association. She has worked with others on more than a dozen major surveys of the ombuds profession. She was also a member of the University and College Ombuds Association (UCOA) and was one of its representatives in discussions with the American Bar Association, which helped in the development of the organizational ombuds profession. Rowe supported the union of UCOA and TOA, which became what is now known as the International Ombuds Association (IOA).

In 2001, Rowe was one of eleven co-authors of *Guidelines for the Design of Integrated Conflict Management Systems*, a major report from the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR) published by the Institute on Conflict Resolution, Cornell University Press.

In 2016, Rowe was one of two ombuds on the chiResolutions team that wrote a 600-page report on the use of Ombuds in Federal Agencies for the Administrative Conference of the United States: *The Ombudsman in Federal Agencies--FINAL REPORT (2016)*. This report resulted in ACUS Recommendation 2016-5 – The Use of Ombuds in Federal Agencies.

Part II: Background

Before Coming to MIT. Rowe worked for more than four years in the Caribbean and Africa. After returning to the US, she finished her doctoral dissertation in economics, "Indigenous Industrial Entrepreneurship in Lagos, Nigeria." She worked briefly for the newspaper *The Bay State Banner* and on other community projects. With two other women in the Cambridge community, she helped to mediate a nonviolent end to a nonviolent building takeover by women, at Harvard University in 1971, now immortalized in the documentary *Left on Pearl*. (The settlement helped establish the Women's Center in Cambridge.)

Child Care Economics. In the late 1960s, Rowe began work with an Abt Associates consulting team in Cambridge. She and her team at Abt helped to create the field of child care economics. For the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Education, she contributed a major chapter on the costs of child care to the report *Child Care in Massachusetts: The Public Responsibility*, and testified thereon before the US Senate Finance Committee.

Early Work on Gender Roles, Androgyny, Discrimination, and Equity. Inspired by work on child care (and by parenthood), Rowe wrote a number of articles in the early 1970s about what is now called "diversity and inclusion." She wrote about equitable gender roles in families, and about overcoming discrimination—against women in paid employment and against men in homemaking, nursing, day care, and parenthood. She was the only regularly attending female Steering Committee member of a Harvard seminar on Raising Children in Modern America; the seminar resulted in a major book with that title. She wrote a successful grant proposal to the Carnegie Corporation for grants to

help universities to fund released time for senior women faculty to inspire and support women students. (MIT professors were among the most innovative and active recipients.) Rowe was active with a dozen women's networks nationwide.

Part III: Pioneering Ombuds Work at MIT

Coming to MIT. In late 1972, Rowe was invited to apply for a job as a Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor for Women. She asked for a longer title, in order to add a focus on work processes. She reasoned that improvements in the lives of women depend in part on the structures of paid and unpaid work for both men and women. She also believed that many improvements in work processes would benefit men as well as women. She thus began work at MIT in February 1973 as Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor for Women and Work.

The President and Chancellor developed terms of reference for her office iteratively over the first few months. In sum, Rowe was instructed to be a confidential, independent, impartial, and informal practitioner. “Independent” meant that she would report only to MIT’s two most senior officers, with explicit access, if necessary, to the MIT Corporation. “Confidential” meant that she would not speak about visitors in her office unless with their permission—and even with permission, only at her own judgment—and that she kept no case records for MIT, retaining only non-identifiable statistics. “Impartial” meant that she would not be an advocate for any party in a dispute and would instead focus on issues and advocacy for fair processes. “Informal” meant that she would not have management decision-making authority or powers of redress, would not participate in formal processes (such as formal grievance processes) at MIT, and that no one was required to work with her.

There were two additional specific instructions. She was to be especially alert for issues that were “new to MIT or not well understood.” And, whenever it was possible—in ways consonant with confidentiality—she was to work with leadership and managers for systems improvements. (This instruction, delivered cheerfully in 1973 by then-President of MIT, Jerome Wiesner, began with: “Mary, do not let any problem happen twice.”) Wiesner believed that true leadership lay in identifying problems as early as possible, and then working within relevant systems to address them as soon as possible.

In her first year, Rowe, hoping to provide a wider set of skills and life experience to the diverse populations at MIT than she could offer on her own, asked for a co-equal counterpart, "if possible, a person of color and, if possible, a man." (Looking back, she sees her subsequent opportunity to work with and learn from three other ombuds at MIT as one of the most important gifts of a lifetime.)

In 1974, Dr. Clarence G. Williams joined her in the President's Office, as Special Assistant to the President and Chancellor for Minority Affairs. The two Special Assistants were made ex officio members of the MIT Faculty (where, however, as designated neutrals, they did not vote.) Williams and Rowe also joined the Faculty Council and Administrative Council ex officio. They served as nonvoting members of numerous other MIT work groups and committees, where they served as a resource. They each worked with MIT's early affirmative action plans. (MIT was the first or one of the first universities to require each department to develop its own plan.) In 1980, Rowe and Williams were formally designated as MIT's Ombudspersons in recognition of their always having received concerns of every kind from everyone in the MIT community.

Identifying and Addressing Harassment and Bullying. In 1973, Rowe encouraged MIT President Wiesner to formulate a policy on sexual and racial harassment. Wiesner then declared all harassment and favoritism to be "not acceptable" because they undermine the mission and values of a major research university. In this statement, Wiesner explicitly included all forms of harassment, including what is now called bullying. Rowe helped to develop associated policies and procedures, starting in 1973 and continuing through the 1990s.

In 1977, MIT awarded Rowe the Billard Award for her "review of work structures and processes ... (toward)… ensuring that the conditions of the workplace are humane and as conducive to human development and personal fulfillment as they can be." The award recognized Rowe's first four years of working with affinity groups and her efforts about harassment, micro-inequities, and macro-inequities.

In 1973, she wrote "Drafting a Letter" for people who feel harassed. In the years before the EEOC Guidelines on Sexual Harassment of 1980, "Drafting a Letter" provided some guidance around the country, and it became known as the "Mary Rowe letter." "Drafting a Letter" (now called "If You Have Been Harassed or Bullied: Some Ideas to Consider.") was widely circulated. (On one occasion, 500,000 copies were made for schoolchildren.)

"Drafting a Letter" suggested that those who feel harassed might draft a specific kind of letter to the perceived offender. The draft requires three scrupulously separated sections. The draft should, unemotionally, lay out objective facts in detail—then, separately, present the feelings of the writer and a statement of injuries or losses, if any—and end with a statement of what the writer wishes to happen next. The technique has been widely used by offended people who wish to control the presentation of their concerns and prepare for how they will respond.

Through observing extensive use of this option by many hundreds of women and men, Rowe learned that drafting such a letter can provide a platform for those in anguish about harassment to collect their thoughts and help deal with their pain—and to find a way to consider and prepare for a possible next step. A letter can help those who feel powerless to discover some sources of power. A letter can sometimes permit an individual to be able to express their particular sense of loss—and specific requests for changes that matter to them personally—thus re-affirming a small measure of autonomy.

Rowe helped those who came to her with drafts to consider the pros and cons of *all* their options, including: "wait and see," a private discussion with a friend or family, actually sending the private letter, and various kinds of formal complaints. A very large majority of those who decided—after careful consideration of other options—actually to *send* the private letter reported that they were glad they had done so. In cases of continued harassment and/or retaliation, being able to prove that the writer had sent a detailed private letter has also provided useful evidence in formal complaints—that harassment had indeed occurred, and that the writer had asked to have it stop.

In 1991 Rowe wrote a one-hundred-page first draft of the MIT *Guide to Dealing with Harassment*; the draft was then mercifully and skillfully edited down by brilliant colleagues led by then-MIT Vice President Kathryn Willmore. The *Guide* presented policy, multiple access points and resources, multiple options, and guidance for complainants, supervisors, respondents, and bystanders.

Affinity Groups and Changes to Policies, Procedures, and Structures. MIT has had, for many decades, a robust tradition of hundreds of formal and informal affinity groups—including many active women's groups with strong, innovative leadership. (Indeed, one of those groups had made the request to Academic Council that led to the creation of Rowe's own position.) From her first day at

work, Rowe was able to listen to and learn from experienced female leaders at MIT, including students, support staff, research and administrative staff, faculty members, and the wives of senior faculty members and senior officers. Many of these women communicated regularly with each other and with Rowe.

Beginning in 1973, Rowe supported and coordinated a new, presidential Women's Advisory Group (WAG). WAG's constituents were self-chosen by each women's group at MIT and the Lincoln Labs (LL); these representatives were then formally appointed by the President of MIT.

Building on MIT traditions, Rowe encouraged the discussions of dozens of affinity groups; these groups usually began with common interests in some topic, such as gender, LGBT identity, ethnicity, race, religion, disabilities, or work in a particular lab, department, and/or job cohort. Some groups were long-lived; others convened briefly around a specific issue. (The tradition of innovative affinity groups is now vigorously evident in MIT's Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), among others.)

For several decades, Rowe was a resource for affinity groups in proposing and working with various innovative and committed managers and senior officers on hundreds of small and large improvements in policies and procedures and structures at MIT.

In some cases the improvement only addressed *symptoms* of a basic issue like respect in "how people refer to each other." But sometimes just addressing the symptoms helped. Application forms for US Savings Bonds no longer required a woman to sign the form as "Miss or Mrs." Letters soliciting promotion reviews no longer asked how a woman candidate compared to "all other women in the field." A number of letters of reference containing comments about a woman's figure—or derogatory sentences about race, color, religion, ethnicity, gender identity, or disability—were returned to sender with a formal letter. Posters seen to be racist, xenophobic, homophobic, religiously offensive, mocking of disabilities, or pornographic could be taken down unless signed by the maker, and if signed by the maker were made subject to further, intense public discussion.

In other cases there were material improvements. In retrospect it was always painfully clear how much more was and is needed. However, each change, at the time, was a source of some joy, and brought hope for the next.

Numerous MIT committees and their chairs were especially effective in working with leadership. In a wide panorama of change, some of the improvements that were discussed with and by Rowe included: changes to the pension plan to deal equally with women and men; maternity leave, parental leave, child care, leaves of absence, and flexible and part-time work; dozens of training programs; routine salary equity and promotion reviews; a job posting system and a dozen other improvements in recruiting and job search; provision of many new women's and singleton bathrooms; abandonment of pornographic films on Registration Day and of pornographic posters and magazines in various offices; the launch of Stopit@mit to deal swiftly with complaints of harassment occurring in electronic communications; and dozens of changes in, respectively, the MIT Medical Department, MIT housing, safety for employees, and women's athletics.

Support staff were included in the MIT directory; new positions were posted in the MIT newspaper *Tech Talk*; engineering assistants received training they requested; a Rainbow Lounge was established in Walker, and new lesbian and gay groups formed; a multidisciplinary working group painstakingly reorganized MIT's approach to repetitive strain injury (RSI); and the MIT Activities Committee (MITAC) was founded by experienced staff to support better access to leisure and arts activities in Massachusetts. The MIT Police developed protocols for responding to reports of rape and offered self-defense training. The MIT Police also forbad attaching bicycles to handicap ramps, among many other changes to enhance safety. A very creative group in 1975 founded *Sojourner*, a women's newspaper that grew to have a nationwide readership and was published until 2002.

After a student presented a generous Random Act of Kindness gift to her office, Rowe worked hard to support Random Acts of Kindness activities.

Mentoring Frameworks. Starting in 1973, Rowe worked with many senior faculty and virtually all MIT department heads to help build early "mentoring frameworks." These frameworks were designed, department by department, for all faculty—and were seen as especially helpful for those people of color and women who had received less mentorship. Departing somewhat from previous views of mentorship, Rowe joined several female and Black colleagues (at MIT and around the country) in emphasizing the importance of seeking *multiple* mentors—

including peers and even subordinates, when appropriate. She supported students in organizing a very successful poster competition about mentoring.

Mediation. Rowe was a cofounder of the first MIT Mediation program and taught in it, and also in a related project that was a precursor to the present-day Resources to Ease Friction and Stress (REFS) program.

Diversity and Bystander Training. Rowe met with dozens of groups and Equal Employment Opportunity committees discussing concerns and plans for what now is called Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). She presented regularly in many diversity training programs, including a training program famously nicknamed "charm school" at the Lincoln Laboratories.

For several years, Rowe supported Associate Provost Jay Keyser's very effective programs for faculty about how to deal with harassment, including making videos and training faculty about how they themselves could be effective complaint handlers. Systematically training faculty as *complaint handlers* serendipitously resulted in many faculty becoming active *bystanders* in preventing and stopping harassment. Beginning in the 1990s, Rowe helped organize the production of videos about bystanders by students, faculty, and staff, and worked with Professor Maureen Scully to organize ad hoc days of bystander training at MIT Sloan.

Investigations. In 1994-95, Rowe worked with HR Vice President Joan Rice and Professor Henry Jacoby and the Ad Hoc Committee on Grievance Investigation Procedures (aka the Jacoby Committee) on recommendations about MIT's formal procedures, some of which focused on avoiding bias or the appearance of bias or conflicts of interest. In 2000, Rowe worked with a multi-cohort committee chaired by Professor Philip Clay to write a *Guide to Investigations*.

Part IV: Research, Writing, and Teaching Stemming from Work at MIT

Micro-inequities (including Micro-aggressions) and Micro-affirmations. In 1973, Rowe began to build on the influential work of Harvard professor and MIT psychiatrist Chester Pierce on micro-aggressions and "childism." She extended Pierce's seminal concept of racist micro-aggressions. The scope of her research included micro-discriminations afflicting *all* "nontraditional" people in any

milieu—whether the behavior was conscious or unconscious, aggressive or nonaggressive.

Rowe then gave the name *micro-inequities* to a very broad set of all micro-behaviors that are perceived to be injurious—including all micro-actions that are perceived to be *unfair*—even if these acts are not aggressive or intended, or are accidental. Her research illuminated the fact that micro-inequities can and do affect everyone. However, Rowe described *how inequities that are connected to some aspect of a person's identity* form part of the scaffolding of structural discrimination—for example, structural racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, classism, ageism, ableism, and religious bias.

Beginning in 1973, Rowe began to write about the range of damages caused by micro-inequities. She described some of the damage caused by unconscious bias, thoughtlessness and negligence, lack of skills or knowledge, and accidents, in addition to intentional discrimination. She documented different kinds of micro-inequities that afflict people of low rank in a hierarchy, men and women of color, white women, lesbian and gay people, transgender people, people of various religions and various nationalities, and those with disabilities.

In addition she documented micro-inequities toward men in fields traditionally held by women, and toward whites living or working in cultures where they are the "nontraditional" people.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Rowe worked with women and people of color who were collecting micro-concerns in a dozen affinity groups, departments, labs, and centers of MIT, and in different divisions and groups at Lincoln Laboratories. Several of these initiatives produced wry, poignant, and skillful videos, with the strong support of HR on campus and at Lincoln Laboratories. (This practice of producing videos to raise awareness about topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging has continued at MIT. For example, in the 1990s, everyday racism was brilliantly illuminated by an ad hoc group of faculty, staff, and students, in collaboration with Clarence Williams and the then-Campus Committee on Race Relations, in producing a powerful series of videos called "It's Intuitively Obvious." In another example, Rowe worked with students, staff, and faculty at MIT Sloan to produce many videotapes encouraging bystanders to respond to micro-inequities.)

In describing ways to prevent and deal with micro-inequities, Rowe wrote of the usefulness and power of "micro-affirmations" (for example in good mentoring, and in affinity groups.) In 1973 Rowe was searching for ways to block her own unconscious bias, and gave the name of micro-affirmations to a broad set of consistent behaviors that might serve that purpose. Affirming behavior also seemed a possible way to mitigate the effects of micro-inequities. She now corresponds with researchers positing more than a dozen hypotheses as to how micro-affirmations may be helpful in responding to and preventing discriminatory micro-inequities, and in fostering a sense of "belonging." Rowe is a supporter of constant, genuine affirmations of the achievements of others, and also of random acts of kindness.

Integrated Conflict Management Systems (ICMS). In 1973, Rowe was introduced to the MIT philosophy of an "integrated systems approach." An integrated system includes the engineering concept of providing "redundancy"—for fail-safe, backup, checks and balances, self-monitoring and self-repair for problems in the system, and identification of new ideas for improvement. Wiesner and Gray had, in fact, designed her job with these concepts in mind, hoping that their special assistants would help to support a systems approach to human services at MIT. This systems approach has manifested itself at MIT in innumerable ways over the years.

Rowe applied the concept of an integrated systems approach to the management of specific issues. Over the years, she discussed this perspective with policy makers on various issues, including research integrity and deliberate interference with the integrity of the work of others; safety issues of all kinds; free speech; personal and financial conflicts of interest; employment of members of the same family; family leave and other leaves of absence; mentoring; retaliation; prevention of repetitive strain injury; fear of HIV/AIDS; fear of violence; and all forms of discrimination, bullying, and abuse.

Rowe and Williams (her fellow ombuds) began writing about the then-nascent ICMS at MIT in the mid-1970s. A systems approach to conflict management coordinates the skills and resources of the various different offices in an organization that provide informal and formal channels for handling concerns and grievances.

Rowe's many subsequent articles illuminated the particular importance of a conflict management system—with multiple and diverse access points—for dealing with harassment and other forms of discrimination and abusive behavior. Providing diverse access points and, where possible, a *choice* of options for those involved with a conflict—as well as options for managers—is fundamental to the effectiveness of conflict management systems.

In 1990, Rowe supported Associate Provost Keyser in founding "Portia," a steady-state, informal working group of MIT senior administrators helping to coordinate the MIT conflict management system. This structure helped to address a vital paradox in attempts to "integrate" a conflict management system. Organizational ombuds, by their professional Standards of Practice, may not report to a compliance office. (For example, ombuds may not keep identifiable case records for the employer.) For the same reason, an ombuds also would not supervise a compliance office. However an ombuds office *can* be an informal part of an integrated system, including participation in an informal coordination group, in a way that accords with the Standards of Practice for the ombuds profession.

Offering Options and a *Choice* of Options. Rowe's research demonstrated that most people who feel harassed and bullied require informal as well as formal options—and a choice of options—if they are to consider taking action. The same is true for responsible peers and bystanders; that is, peers and bystanders often require a choice of options and diverse access points if they are to act responsibly and effectively. The same is also true for supervisors and managers, who often need to talk with someone about all of *their* options if they are to take action about abusive behavior or other delicate issues.

The ubiquitous need for a choice of options for dealing with conflict also underscores the need for confidential, neutral, independent organizational ombudspersons who practice informally. (NB: the job title for these professionals has many forms in common use, including ombudsman, ombudsperson, and ombuds.)

The Ombuds' Role (as a Zero-barrier Office) in a Conflict Management System. Organizational ombuds help constituents to understand and choose from all the informal and formal options within an ICMS. They also *provide* many informal options: ombuds help people learn how to help themselves, and—with permission—ombuds help informally with shuttle diplomacy, mediation, generic

approaches, and training, and they provide support for systems improvements. (A generic approach to a complaint can occur when an ombuds helps the employer look into and address a problem—for example, uncompensated overtime—without identifying any specific complainant.)

In many articles, Rowe described the importance of having an organizational ombuds office as a "zero-barrier" office, if an ICMS is to be as effective as possible. She describes a zero-barrier (or no-barriers) office as one which is seen as accessible and safe for all, and is perceived as fair and credible. Ombuds offices help the ICMS by alleviating some of the risk that people face in an organization if they raise concerns or even good ideas. When individuals can raise concerns and good ideas, with little or no personal risk—safely and in a timely way—the organization then benefits by having more information to manage and mitigate risk.

An ombuds office contributes in several ways to the effectiveness of an ICMS. The office serves:

1) As an early, continuous, and highly responsive notification-and-warning system for managers—about serious errors and unacceptable behavior—from complainants and bystanders and the "bystanders of bystanders" who are otherwise afraid to come forward;

2) To embody sustained attention to ever-recurring problems of racism, xenophobia, sexism, and all other locally relevant forms of discrimination, abuse, and retaliation, as well as safety and integrity issues;

3) To help to identify and communicate with managers about new or overlooked problems and issues, exemplary innovations, and possibilities for systems improvements; and

4) To provide informal and largely invisible coordination and support for all the units in a conflict management system, in the context of frequent referrals made and received, and frequent follow-up about issue resolution.

Rowe has written many articles about the organizational ombudsperson profession, reporting from biennial surveys about what ombuds do and do *not* do, and about ways to evaluate the effectiveness of ombudspersons. She was for many years a

member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association.*

Bystanders and the Bystanders of Bystanders. Since the late 1980s, Rowe has written—and helped to produce many videos—about the importance of responsible bystanders, and the bystanders of bystanders, in preventing and remediating unacceptable behavior. She has tried to mitigate an unfortunate common belief that bystanders typically are not helpful. She has illuminated the importance of *bystanders of bystanders* in supporting bystanders who learn of unacceptable behavior to be able to take effective action.

Over her years as an ombuds, Rowe collected data showing that dozens of kinds of responsible bystander behavior were actually common and effective at MIT.

Rowe believes that often the most effective constraints on unacceptable behavior by powerful people are actions by other powerful bystanders. She has meticulously described the barriers faced by bystanders to show that bystanders often need support, and sometimes customized support, to take action.

Rowe writes that bystander training by itself is helpful but often not enough to surmount the many barriers faced by bystanders. Organizations can review and address each barrier. As an example, supervisors and managers need specific training about how to be perceived as appropriately *receptive* to bystanders, as well as to the bystanders of bystanders.

Teaching. Rowe served as a reader or advisor for about a dozen master's and doctoral theses for graduate students at MIT and other universities. She also taught courses at MIT on several topics, including:

Androgyny. Rowe co-taught one of the first classes on androgyny at a US university—an undergraduate seminar at MIT on gender roles—for several years in the early 1970s. In support of the course, she and her co-teacher Robert Fein helped David Ferriero in the MIT Libraries as he established a unique Men's Studies Collection together with a Women's Studies Collection in a very accessible reading room.

HIV/AIDS. As an ombuds, Rowe was alerted to fear of HIV/AIDS in the workplace, after hearing from many constituents who were afraid of co-workers

and afraid to come to work. She proposed to Professor David Baltimore that they sponsor an interdisciplinary course open to all students—and then collaborated with him on the course for two years in the 1980s.

Negotiation and Conflict Management. In 1985, Rowe began, as have many others, to study and build on the seminal work of Professors Richard Walton and Robert McKersie on negotiation theory. (Walton and McKersie wrote a foundational text for the field: *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations*.) Because a "negotiation" can be defined as "any interaction between two or more points of view," Rowe saw that the tools of negotiation theory are extraordinarily useful to ombuds.

Rowe joined the MIT Sloan School part-time as an Adjunct Professor and applied negotiation theory to the field of organizational conflict management. In turn, she applied what she learned from ombuds practice back to negotiation theory and teaching. She made small contributions to theory concerning the behavior of people whose interest in interactions is to injure another party in a negotiation. Drawing on many thousands of discussions in the ombuds office, Rowe also studied and writes about the several sources of power available to individuals and groups who may think they "have no power."

Rowe taught the course 15.667 Negotiation and Conflict Management at MIT Sloan from 1985 to 2005. 15.667 was among the first such courses linking the two topics. The course, now available via MIT's Opencourseware, frequently used disguised cases from Rowe's work as an ombuds. Roles in most of the cases are gender-free. Various cases explore the nuances of negotiation between parties of different socio-economic and demographic backgrounds.

Outside MIT, she has been active with dozens of colleagues in teaching negotiations and making dozens of videos with and for organizational ombuds. Rowe served for decades on the Editorial Board of the *Negotiation Journal.*

Part V: Colleagueship and Leadership in Ombuds Associations

In 1982, with Dr. Clarence Williams, her fellow ombuds at MIT, Rowe was a co-host of the group that became the Corporate Ombudsman Association (COA) two

years later. She was the first president of COA in 1984 and then a long-term Board member. She was a member of its successor TOA (The Ombudsman Association), and of UCOA (the University and College Ombudsperson Association). TOA and UCOA merged; Rowe is an active member of their successor IOA (the International Ombuds Association). She has helped with biennial surveys of ombuds (from 1984 to the present) and research about ombuds functions.

Rowe and her fellow MIT ombuds Thomas Zgambo and Toni Robinson collaborated with many colleagues to start a regional group of ombuds that meets periodically at MIT. The East Coast Ombuds Group (ECOG) has been overseen jointly by the Ombuds at MIT, Harvard Medical School, Harvard University, and Boston University.

Rowe managed a private, hidden mailing list among ombuds for about twenty years starting in the mid-1980s. Dozens of ombuds colleagues consulted with each other, daily and weekly, on this confidential mailing list. (Any colleague who had a delicate question could send it to Rowe, who would delete identifying material and then forward the question to the group.)

For many years, Rowe surveyed ombuds about the "new issues" they identified each year, for an annual ombuds conference presentation called "Crystal Ball."

Part VI: Consulting

Rowe has been active as a consultant since 1970. In 1973, she cofounded a working group of local area women's advocates called W-4 (women working with women) who met at MIT.

Rowe has given lectures at dozens of academic, government, and corporate institutions. In 1975, she was the economist on a study trip organized by Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner on child care in the USSR. In 1985, she co-led a monthlong study group of forty mediators from the US to China.

Rowe has helped many hundreds of corporations, government agencies, and academic organizations around the world to develop their own conflict management systems and to establish their own ombuds offices. She consults weekly with other ombuds around the world about ombuds issues. She has frequently helped to evaluate ombuds offices and conflict management systems.

In 1987, she began the first of dozens of consultations to US government agencies and departments about setting up ombuds offices. For a short time, she acted as an external ombudsman to a federal law enforcement agency as it set up its ombuds program. She has served a faith-based organization for many years as consultant for their worldwide conflict management program.

In 1992, Rowe was the outside consultant to the US Department of the Navy during the stand-down to discuss sexual harassment after the Tailhook scandal; she received a Meritorious Civilian Service Award for this work. In 2001, Rowe was a co-author of *Guidelines for the Design of Integrated Conflict Management Systems*, a major report from the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR). In 2006 and 2009 respectively, Rowe was a co-author of two Intelligence Science Board monographs; her chapters focus on what negotiation theory teaches about non-coercive methods of interviewing.

From 2014 to 2016, Rowe was the senior ombuds on the chiResolutions team that produced a major report, *The Ombudsman in Federal Agencies, 2016*, to the Administrative Conference of the United States (ACUS).

Part VII: Current Work at MIT Sloan

Rowe retired from the MIT Ombuds Office in 2014 after nearly 42 years as an organizational ombuds. She continues her research as an Adjunct Professor at the MIT Sloan School. She publishes regularly and provides free access to most of her published articles on her website. Rowe also conducts trainings for ombuds and consults to ombuds colleagues around the world.

For the MIT Archives, Rowe organized many materials and her own articles into two collections, one about her work in the Ombuds Office at MIT and one about the beginnings of the organizational ombuds profession.

Rowe corresponds frequently about research on micro-affirmations, bystanders, harassment, and the functions, value, and effectiveness of ombuds. She continues her work on helping individuals to deal with any form of unacceptable behavior; helping communities and organizations to recognize the widespread contributions of responsible bystanders; and training managers to know how to listen to bystanders and the bystanders of bystanders. A collection of some of Rowe's

recent articles are featured in a 2023 Mary Rowe special issue of the *Journal of the International Ombuds Association*.

Part VIII: Mentors and Supporters

Family members have been Mary Rowe's most important role models, inspirations, and mentors—her mother, her spouse, and her children and grandchildren are the most important of the most important.

Rowe owes a great deal to many other mentors and colleagues, every one of whom deserves thanks and deep appreciation. Most ombuds probably learn the most about their profession from constituents who come to the office with concerns, or responding to concerns. At least, that was the case for Rowe, who learned important ideas and values from almost all of the more than 20,000 individuals who brought concerns to her office—each person very human—and no one of them the same as anyone else. MIT's affinity groups—including dozens of women's groups, groups with men and women of color, groups organized by job description, and those in the LGBTQIA+ and disabilities communities, have been indescribably important teachers and mentors.

Among Mary Rowe's other most helpful mentors were the MIT presidents—especially the first two, with whom she worked closely—and some hundreds of other senior officers, senior faculty, and MIT colleagues who supported her work and shared wisdom.

Rowe served in the Ombuds Office with deeply skilled and profoundly committed and caring Black colleagues—colleagues who were constant mentors and role models about all kinds of conflict, and especially about the structural issues of race, gender, and class. These were Ombudspersons Clarence Williams, Thomas Zgambo, and Toni Robinson—as well as Rosa Hunt and Carolyn Triplett, who created and managed a welcoming ombuds office. These five colleagues—and Kate Schenck, who managed the office with extraordinary focus and empathy for the last 22 years of Rowe's service—exemplified and modeled how to welcome, listen to, and serve people with concerns and good ideas.

Many dozens of organizational ombuds around the world have been brilliant mentors to Rowe, as well as fellow researchers and teachers. MIT Sloan

Professors Robert McKersie and Tom Kochan provided wry humor and kind colleagueship, deep scholarly knowledge and multi-faceted wisdom—and an extraordinarily useful theoretical framework of negotiations theory for practicing, studying, and teaching the new profession of organizational ombudsmanry.

Deep gratitude to those who inspired and supported these collections. Mary Rowe collected materials and publications under specific instructions and at the specific request of MIT Presidents Jerome Wiesner and Paul Gray. President Rafael Reif and Dr. Jean-Jacques Degroof helped in signally important ways to support the work.

~ Mary P. Rowe, Sept. 2021, with updates added in Oct. 2023