



Inaugural Report of the Office of the Ombuds January 15, 2008 – June 30, 2009



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Executive Summary

The inaugural report of the Office of the Ombuds at Gallaudet University introduces and clarifies the concept of the ombuds, which is a relatively new concept in the United States as well as in the academic setting. This report elaborates on the history of the concept of the ombuds, the best practices in defining the purpose and scope of the office's services, and the adherence of the office to internationally recognized standards of practice and code of ethics of ombudsing as delineated by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). The Office of the Ombuds was launched at Gallaudet University in January 2008 as a conflict management resource which is accessible, confidential, neutral, independent, and informal in nature in order to expedite resolution of campus-related concerns and conflicts.

The report then addresses the specific activities and endeavors of the Office of the Ombuds in order to set the framework, protocols, procedures, and visibility of this new office. This involves multiple orientation workshops, conflict management training, presentations on special topics, hiring a student to serve as the outreach specialist, networking, and developing effective marketing strategies.

The bulk of this report focuses on the statistics and patterns tracked by the Office of the Ombuds regarding the utilization of the office, as well as demographics of visitors and their issues and concerns (without revealing the identity of visitors). The ombuds launched a formal database system on July 1, 2008, and for its first twelve months received 362 visitors and 1,069 issues, concerns, or inquiries. In comparison to other academic ombuds offices in the nation, the utilization of the Gallaudet ombuds is higher than average.

The eighteen graphs in this report illustrate the utilization of the office, demographics of the visitors, and the various issues which have been brought to the attention of the campus ombuds. In order to organize and track issues, the Gallaudet ombuds adopted the IOA uniform reporting categories. Accordingly, in the order of concerns received, the graphs of the categories of issues are: evaluative relationships; service and administrative issues; peer and colleague relationships; organizational, strategic, and mission-related issues; legal, regulatory, and financial compliance; career progression and development; safety, health, and physical environment; values, ethics, and standards; and employee compensation and benefits.

The report then summarizes actions taken to follow up on such concerns, and identifies notable patterns and trends based on issues brought to the attention of the ombuds. The ombuds provides recommendations to University administrators for policy changes, needed training, or other measures to enhance the campus climate. The report then concludes with identifying future goals and challenges, including meaningful collaboration with other campus units and departments and effective marketing and training activities.

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Introduction

The Office of the Ombuds¹ at Gallaudet University was created in January 2008. In launching this office, Gallaudet University employed internationally recognized best practices of providing an ombuds office as a conflict management resource for members of its University community. This accessible, confidential, neutral, independent, and informal resource facilitates the expeditious resolution of campus-related issues, inquiries, concerns, and conflicts.

The ombuds office is staffed by one full-time ombudsperson with an independent budget. At the time the office was established, plans were announced to add an office assistant at a later time. As a stand-alone unit, the ombuds acknowledges and conveys great appreciation for the generous support of other campus offices and units, such as the Office of the Provost, Campus Activities, Academic Technology, and Enrollment Marketing, which provided indispensable administrative assistance such as furnishing office supplies, handling logistical details for office events and workshops, technical assistance for developing reports and statistics, computer and web assistance, and creating flyers, banners, and other marketing tools.²

Because this is the inaugural report issued by the campus ombuds, introductory details about the history of this office as well as its parameters will be provided in this report for orientation purposes. Such information may also be obtained by visiting the website maintained by this office at <http://ombuds.gallaudet.edu>.

This report will examine the profile of the visitors of the Office of the Ombuds, issues and concerns brought to the attention of the ombuds, activities undertaken by the office, issues and trends identified by the office, and future goals and challenges. Appendices are attached to share detailed information about the practices and ethics adopted by the office.

History

The first historical record of an ombuds dates to 1809, when the Swedish parliament appointed an ombuds to resolve problems in absence of the country's king. The concept of an ombuds reemerged in 1953 when Denmark established an ombuds office to deal with its citizens' complaints regarding the government. In the 21st century, offices of ombuds proliferated on

¹ Initially, the University advertised the position as an “ombudsman”. Upon launching the office, the current ombuds revised the position to read “ombuds” in order to reflect the best practices in the field of ombudsing. For instance, a 2008 poll was taken to survey existing ombuds about their preferences about “ombudsman” as compared to “ombuds”, and 43% preferred ombuds, 38% preferred ombudsman, and 19% had no opinion. International Ombudsman Association 2008 Membership Needs Assessment, http://www.ombudsassociation.org/members/documents/Membership_Needs_Assessment_Results.pdf.

² For this report, special thanks go to Jane Jonas of Eyeth Studios, LLC, for her mastery in developing the graphs, to Shannon Augustine of Academic Technology for her formatting expertise, and to many others who assisted in providing invaluable data and materials for comparison.

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University campuses across the nation, and now there are at least two hundred sixty-five (265)³ educational institutions which offer the services of an ombuds as a campus conflict management resource.

The concept of establishing an ombuds office at Gallaudet University appears to have first surfaced in the Campus Climate Process of 2003. As a result of this process, eight appointed workgroups submitted a total of forty recommendations per their mandate to submit five recommendations per group. Several workgroups in this process specifically identified the need of creating a campus ombuds office. For instance, workgroup #1 (focused on respect/trust/fairness) recommended on page 14 of its report that an ombuds office be established in order to provide the campus with an impartial, informal, and confidential conflict management resource. Workgroup #7 (focused on community building) elaborated further on the importance of creating a campus ombuds office by ranking this recommendation its top priority. These reports were dated March 2003, and may be located at:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20040202023957/campusclimate.gallaudet.edu/WorkGroupsTopic.s.asp>.

Subsequently on September 17, 2003, past President I. King Jordan announced at a town hall meeting the selection of ten recommendations from the total group for implementation, and one of the selected recommendations was to establish a university ombuds office. Past President I. King Jordan decreed that there would be two ombuds offices: one primarily to serve students, and one to serve employees. Apparently this recommendation did not come to fruition; however, shortly afterwards, an existing employee had a part-time role as a Student Advocate.

Another reason for the establishment of the ombuds office may be attributed to the University mission, vision, and strategic goals and objectives which guide the allocation of campus resources. One of the five Gallaudet strategic goals developed to implement its vision is to “create and sustain a climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff and administrators for the full range of human diversity, educational backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.” This goal mirrors the sixth of the fourteen accreditation standards for educational and institutional quality established by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). In the MSCHE monitoring report on April 1, 2008⁴, Gallaudet reported that the Office of the Ombuds, which was launched in January 2008, is one of the committed resources in order to meet this particular strategic goal and accreditation standard of creating a climate that fosters respect among members of the campus community. Gallaudet’s sage

³ This number is derived from the Ombuds Blog Directory, <http://ombudsblogdirectory.blogspot.com/search/label/Colleges%20and%20Universities>, as displayed on September 21, 2009. This directory does not include academic ombuds offices without websites, so the actual number of existing academic ombuds offices may be greater.

⁴ “Monitoring Report to the MSCHE”, Page 18, <http://aaweb.gallaudet.edu/documents/MSCHE/2008-04-Gallaudet-MSCHE-MonitoringReport.pdf>.

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efforts in creating new programs (such as the Office of the Ombuds) and initiatives (such as the Diversity Action Plan) may be solid catalysts leading to the unusually quick reaffirmation of accreditation on June 26, 2008.

Purpose and Scope of Services⁵

The ombuds provides a neutral, confidential, informal and independent environment to the extent possible based on the laws and policies governing the office. The ombuds office is a confidential place where members of the University community can seek guidance regarding issues, questions, or concerns which hinder their ability to excel academically and/or in the workplace.

Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics

The ombuds adheres to the International Ombudsman Association (“IOA”) [Standards of Practice](#), [Code of Ethics](#), and [Best Practices](#). These tenets require that the ombuds functions independently of their organization, be confidential and neutral, and limits the scope of her services to informal means of dispute resolution. The ombuds acts with integrity, fosters respect for all members of the University and promotes procedural fairness in the content and administration of the University’s practices, processes and policies. The ombuds is a member of the IOA and attends regular trainings and the annual IOA conferences.

The ombuds publicizes the confidential, independent, neutral and informal nature of her services through a website, promotional materials, orientation workshops, and/or other mechanisms and means as appropriate.

A. Independence

The ombuds must be free from interference in the performance of her duties. This independence is ensured primarily through organizational recognition, reporting structure, and neutrality. The ombuds operates independent of ordinary line and staff structures. The ombuds exercises sole discretion over whether and how to act regarding individual matters or systemic

⁵ The principles indicated in this purported purpose and scope of services were mainly derived from the November 2006 Declaration of Best Practices for University of California Ombuds Offices (<http://www2.ucsc.edu/ombuds/about/BestPracticesDeclaration.pdf>), the August 2006 Charter Agreement for the Claremont Graduate University Ombuds Office (<http://www.cgu.edu/PDFFiles/PresidentsOffice/Ombuds/CharterFinal.pdf>), and the May 2007 charter agreement for the Ombuds Office of the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (<http://www.csupomona.edu/~ombuds/charter.shtml>). Language from other terms of reference and charters may have been incorporated, such as those for West Georgia University, Concordia University, the University of Arizona, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and McMaster University.

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concerns. The ombuds has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.

To fulfill her functions, the ombuds has a specific allocated budget, adequate space, and sufficient resources to meet operating needs and to pursue continuing professional development. The ombuds has the authority to manage the budget and operations of the Office of the Ombuds. During this timeframe, the ombuds reports to the office of the University Provost for administrative and budgetary matters and trends affecting the University climate. Starting January 1, 2010, the ombuds reports directly to the President in accordance to recognized best practices as identified in [Section 2.3 of the IOA Standards of Practice](#).

B. Confidentiality

The ombuds does not disclose and cannot be required to disclose any information provided in confidence, except to address an imminent risk of serious harm. The decision whether an imminent risk of serious harm exists in order to make such disclosure rests solely at the discretion of the ombuds, and usually means the existence of an imminent risk to human life. The ombuds asserts that there is a privilege with respect to the identity of visitors and their issues. The ombuds does not confirm communicating with any party or parties, or disclose any confidential information without the party's or parties' express permission provided, and at the discretion of the ombuds. The ombuds does not participate as witness with respect to any confidential communication, or participate in any formal process inside or outside the University.

C. Neutrality

The ombuds is neutral in her/his activities, and does not take sides in any conflict, dispute or issue. The ombuds impartially considers the interests and concerns of all parties involved in a situation with the aim of facilitating communication and assisting the parties in reaching mutually acceptable agreements that are fair and equitable, and consistent with the mission and policies of the University. The ombuds avoids involvement in matters where there may be a conflict of interest. (A conflict of interest occurs when the ombuds' private interests, real or perceived, supersede or compete with her dedication to the neutral and independent role of the ombuds.) When a conflict of interest exists, the ombuds takes all steps necessary to disclose and/or avoid the conflict.

D. Informality

The ombuds is a resource for informal dispute resolution only. The ombuds does not formally investigate, arbitrate, adjudicate or in any other way participate in any internal or external formal process or action. Use of the ombuds is voluntary and not a required step in any grievance process or University policy.

Authority and Limits of the Ombuds

The authority of the ombuds derives from the University administration as manifest by the endorsement of the University.

A. Authority of the Ombuds

1. Initiating Informal Inquiries

The ombuds is entitled to inquire informally about any issue concerning the University and affecting any member of the University community. Therefore, the ombuds may initiate informal inquiries into matters that come to her attention without having received a specific complaint from an affected member of the University community.

2. Access to Information

The ombuds has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law, from files and offices of the University, and preserves and respects the confidentiality of that information. Requests by the ombuds for information are handled with reasonable promptness by University departments and units.

3. Ending Involvement in Matters

The ombuds may withdraw from or decline to look into a matter if she believes involvement would be inappropriate for any reason.

4. Discussions with Visitors and Others

The ombuds has the authority to discuss a range of options available to her visitors, including both informal and formal processes. The ombuds may make any recommendations she deems appropriate with regard to resolving problems or improving policies, rules or procedures. However, the ombuds has no actual authority to impose remedies or sanctions or to enforce or change any policy, rule or procedure.

5. Access to Legal Counsel

On occasion, the ombuds may require legal advice or representation, from time to time, in order to fulfill her required functions. The ombuds is provided with legal counsel separate and independent from the University in the event she is asked for documents or testimony related to any litigation or other formal process arising out of ombuds' activities, or when any other conflict of interest arises between the ombuds office and the administration or the University.

B. Limitations on the Authority of the Ombuds

1. Receiving Notice for the University

Communication to the ombuds does not constitute notice to the University. This includes allegations that may be perceived to be violations of laws, regulations or policies, such as sexual harassment, issues covered by the whistleblower policy, or incidents subject to reporting under the Clery Act⁶. Although the ombuds may receive information about such allegations, she is not a “campus security authority” as defined in the Clery Act, nor is she required to report these allegations to the University. If a visitor would like to put the University on notice or make a formal report, the ombuds provides the visitor with information about the appropriate measures to do so accordingly.

2. Formal Processes and Investigations

The ombuds does not conduct formal investigations of any kind. The ombuds also does not participate in the substance of any formal dispute processes, outside agency complaints or lawsuits, either on behalf of a visitor to the ombuds or on behalf of the University. Because confidentiality and informality are critically important to the ombuds office, all communications with the ombuds are made with the understanding that they are confidential, off-the-record, and that the ombuds will not be called to testify as a witness in any formal or legal proceeding to reveal confidential communications. The Office of the Ombuds provides an alternate channel for dispute resolution, and all use of ombuds services shall be voluntary.

3. Record Keeping

The ombuds does not keep records for the University, and does not create or maintain documents or records for the University about individual case issues, questions, or concerns. Notes and any other materials developed during the course of working on a case are maintained in a secure location and manner, and routinely destroyed at regular intervals as determined by the ombuds once the case is concluded. The ombuds may maintain anonymous statistical data to assist the ombuds in reporting trends and giving feedback.

4. Advocacy for Parties

The ombuds does not act as an advocate or representative for any party in a dispute.

⁶ The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (The Clery Act) is a federal statute codified at 20 U.S.C. §1092(f), with implementing regulations at 34 CFR §668.46. Under this Act, all postsecondary institutions which participate in federal student financial aid programs are required to maintain and disclose certain information about crime on and near their respective campuses.

5. Adjudication of Issues

The ombuds does not have authority to adjudicate, impose remedies or sanctions, or to enforce or change University policies or rules.

Protection from Retaliation for Using the Ombuds Office

All members of the University community have the right to consult the ombuds without reprisal. The ombuds works with the University to create policies to protect visitors from retaliation for using the services of the ombuds office.

Outreach Efforts

Given that the campus community continues to receive new students and other community members, effective outreach activities are paramount in order to ensure that the campus community is constantly and comprehensively apprised regarding the availability and appropriateness of the ombuds office as a conflict management resource. This is especially true in light of the relative novelty of this office on campus and in the United States.

The ombuds office conducts numerous orientation activities for the campus community, especially new students. Such orientation activities are provided in small group settings in order to cater to the particular needs and interests of various community members. For example, separate orientation workshops are provided to the following new students: undergraduate, graduate, international, Jumpstart participants, new signers, new student organization officers, Bison leaders, English Language Institute (ELI) students, honor program students, continuing education students, paraprofessionals, and students with disabilities, as well as their families and parents, and others as appropriate. Additional orientation workshops are provided to faculty and staff members.

Further, the ombuds office accepts numerous invitations to provide legal training and guest presentations for the campus community, such as:

1. First Year Seminar Course
2. Advocacy Course for Office of Students with Disabilities
3. Business Law and/or Ethics
4. Employment Rights
5. Group Conflict Management Strategies
6. Disability Rights
7. Professional Development for Managers: Managing Conflict
8. Mediation, Dialogue, and Deliberation
9. Conflict Strategies Inventory
10. DC Disability Awareness Day in Partnership with D.C. Government

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Marketing efforts were amplified by the hire of a prodigious student assistant for outreach purposes for the Spring 2008 semester. This student, Christine Parrotte, created advertisements for the student newspaper, campus television, bookmarks and pens, and a large wall banner (a copy of the banner is displayed on the front cover of this report.) The ombuds office endeavors to continue the employment of students in order to enhance their marketability post-graduation, and to market the office more effectively.

Profile of Visitors and Issues Brought to Attention of the Ombuds

In the first stage of the office's inception from January 15, 2008 to June 30, 2008, the Gallaudet ombuds office focused on launching this office which included setting up the framework of this office, establishing a website, researching best practices of ombudsing, creating an intake form and other procedural protocols, developing an independent Internet-based electronic database in order to cull and categorize concerns of visitors, becoming oriented with the University with many informational meetings, and networking with other academic ombuds at local universities, conferences, and training programs.

A formal database system which reflected current best practices was launched on July 1, 2008, so the statistics culled in this analysis involves the pilot year of this database program, from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009. Within this timeframe, the ombuds office was visited by a total of three-hundred and sixty-two (362) visitors. During this specific timeframe, there were approximately 203 faculty members and 881 staff members. Hence, the ombuds office received a total of 137 employees as visitors, which is approximately 12.6% of campus employees. This timeframe also involved approximately 1,581 students, and the ombuds served a total of 192 students, i.e., approximately 8.2% of the student population during its first year of data collection.

Accordingly to a 2003 survey of academic ombuds offices, the utilization of the ombuds office by the campus community is usually around four percent (4%).⁷ Moreover, a 2008 survey of ombuds offices indicated that the average number of cases handled per year is in the range of 101-300 cases per year with 48% of the respondents within this category.⁸

In sum, ombuds offices in the 2008 survey reported their respective caseloads as follows:

Less than 100 cases per year: 30.5%
101-300 cases: 48%
301-600 cases: 17%
600+ cases: 4.5%

⁷ 2003 The Ombuds Association (TOA) Compensation Survey, 2003. TOA is now known as the International Ombudsman Association (IOA).

⁸ 2008 The International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Job Analysis Report, as conducted by the Schroeder Measurement Technologies, Inc., and available online via the IOA members-only website.

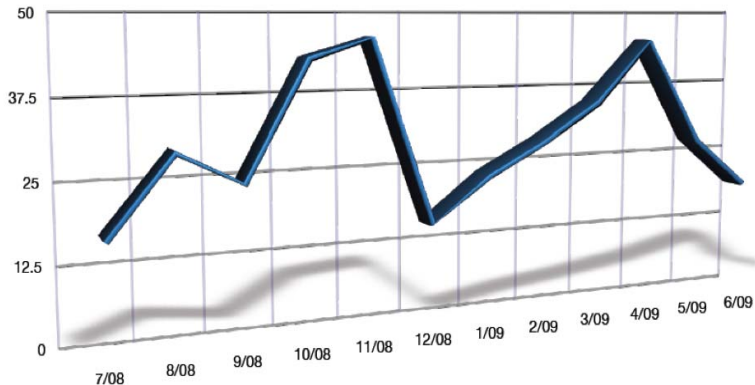
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The Gallaudet University ombuds office handled three-hundred and sixty-two (362) visitors, which ranks the utilization of the office as higher than normal. Such higher than normal utilization may be a result of effective marketing, interest in conflict management, and/or accessible and meaningful office programs and services. In fact the number of visitors per month continues to grow steadily as this report is being completed.

Graph of Utilization of the Ombuds Office

NUMBER OF VISITORS

MONTH	# COUNT
7/08	18
8/08	30
9/08	25
10/08	43
11/08	46
12/08	17
1/09	24
2/09	29
3/09	35
4/09	45
5/09	28
6/09	20

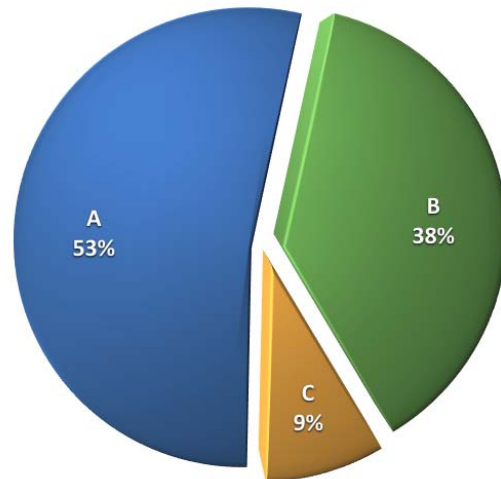


The below demographics regarding the visitors' status quo, ethnicity, hearing status, and gender were self-identified by the visitors themselves.

Graph of Visitors' Status Quo

CATEGORIES OF VISITORS

		count	percentage
A	Student	192	53%
B	Employee	138	38%
C	Other	32	9%
	Total	362	100%

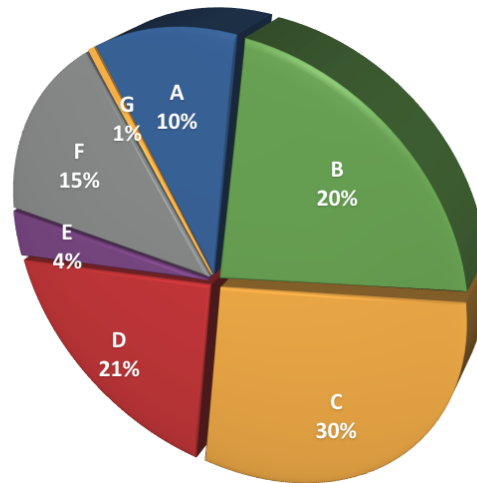


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Graph of Students as Visitors

CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS

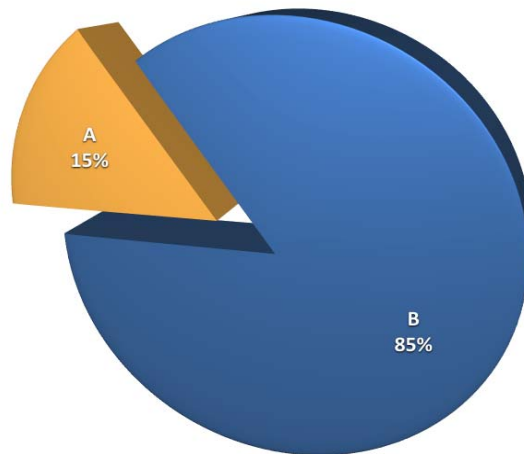
		count	percentage
A	Freshman	20	10%
B	Sophomore	39	20%
C	Junior	57	30%
D	Senior	40	21%
E	ELI	7	4%
F	Graduate	28	15%
G	Cont. Ed.	1	1%
	Total	192	100%



Graph of Employees as Visitors

CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYEES

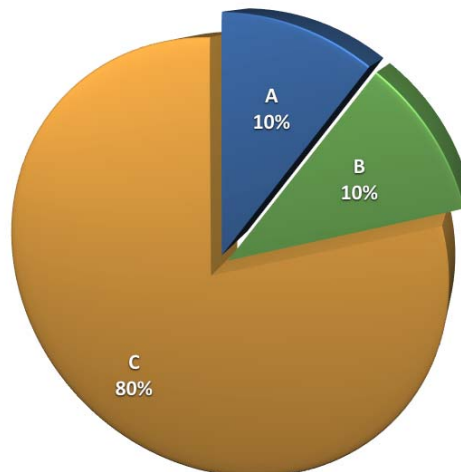
		count	percentage
A	Faculty	20	15%
B	Staff	118	85%
	Total	138	100%



Graph of Other Visitors

CATEGORIES OF OTHER VISITORS

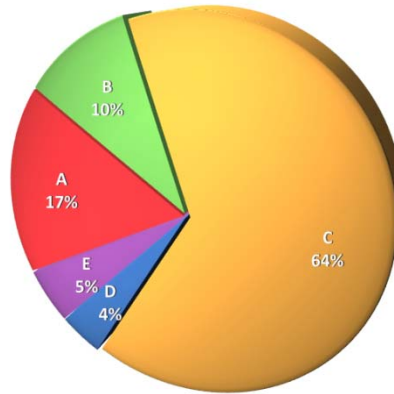
		count	percentage
A	Applicant	3	10%
B	Parent(s)	3	10%
C	Alumnae	26	80%
	Total	32	100%



Graph of Visitors' Ethnicity

ETHNICITY

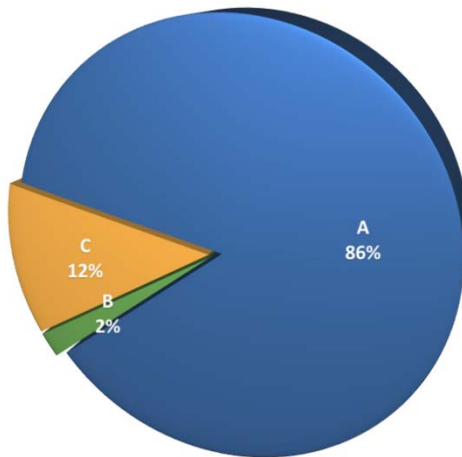
		count	percentage
A	African-American	62	17%
B	Asian	36	10%
C	Caucasian	232	64%
D	Hispanic/Latino	15	4%
E	International	17	5%
	Total	362	100%



Graph of Visitors' Hearing Status

HEARING STATUS

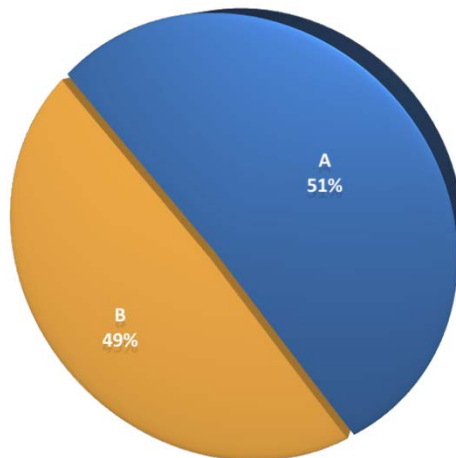
		count	percentage
A	Deaf	312	86%
B	Hard of Hearing	7	2%
C	Hearing	43	12%
	Total	362	100%



Graph of Visitors' Gender

GENDER

		count	percentage
A	Female	183	51%
B	Male	179	49%
	Total	362	100%



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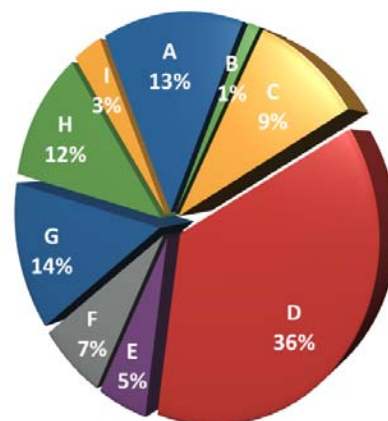
Graph of Various Issue Categories Brought to the Attention of the Ombuds

The visitors brought to the attention of the campus ombuds a total of one thousand and sixty-nine (1,069) issues. In reviewing the profile analysis of concerns below, please bear in mind that the data in this report results from self-selected individuals who chose to visit the ombuds office, rather than a random and unbiased survey, so such data may not be statistically representative of the campus as a whole. Additionally, the issues identified may be unsubstantiated and unverified because the ombuds, in adherence with the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) [Standards of Practice](#), cannot conduct formal investigations to validate such issues. Hence, such alleged issues may be individuals' subjective perceptions rather than objective judgments.

In order to organize and categorize the one thousand and sixty-nine (1,069) issues brought to the attention of the ombuds, the Office of the Ombuds adopted the IOA uniform reporting categories (URC) which are quite detailed and complementary to the issues which were raised on our campus which were tracked through the use of the office's own intake forms.⁹ Accordingly, the nine IOA URC categories of issues which were brought to the attention of the campus ombuds are illustrated in the next graph.

CATEGORIES OF ISSUES

	count	percentage
A Peer Relationships	134	13%
B Employee Compensation & Benefits	12	1%
C Legal, Regulatory, & Financial Compliance	96	9%
D Evaluative Relationships	385	36%
E Career Progression & Development	81	5%
F Safety, Health, & Physical Environment	68	7%
G Service & Administrative Issues	143	14%
H Organizational & Strategic Issues	124	12%
I Values, Ethics, & Standards	26	3%
Total	1069	100%



⁹ The IOA Uniform Reporting Categories document in its entirety is attached as Appendix A, and the Gallaudet University Office of the Ombuds intake form is attached as Appendix B.

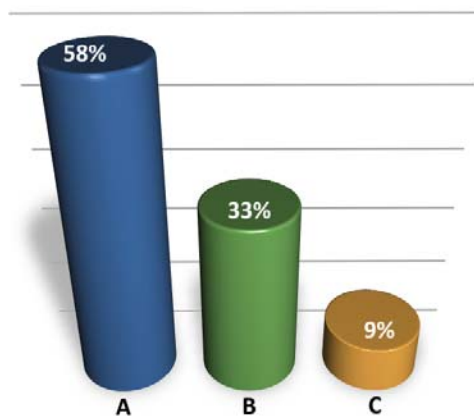
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Graph of Concerns about Employee Compensation and Benefits

The first Uniform Reporting Category (URC) of the International Ombuds Association (IOA) is compensation and benefits, which addresses questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits, and other benefit programs. The Office of the Ombuds tallied the number of concerns about compensation and benefits as follows:

EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

	count	percentage
A Compensation	7	58%
B Payroll	4	33%
C Benefits	1	9%
Total	12	100%

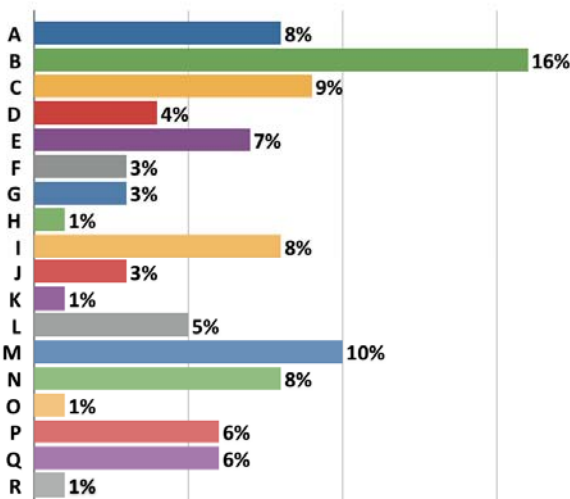


Graph of Concerns about Evaluative Relationships

The second IOA URC category focuses on concerns about evaluative relationships and pertinent questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (e.g., supervisor-employee, or faculty-student). The tally by the Office of the Ombuds is as follows:

EVALUATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

	count	percentage
A Priorities, Values, & Beliefs	29	8%
B Respect & Treatment	59	16%
C Trust & Integrity	32	9%
D Reputation	15	4%
E Communication	37	7%
F Bullying & Mobbing	11	3%
G Diversity-related	11	3%
H Retaliation	5	1%
I Assignments & Schedules	32	8%
J Feedback	10	3%
K Consultation	5	1%
L Perf. Appraisal & Grading	21	5%
M Departmental Climate	39	10%
N Supervisory Effectiveness	30	8%
O Insubordination	3	1%
P Discipline	22	6%
Q Equity of Treatment	23	6%
R Physical Violence	1	1%
Total	385	100%



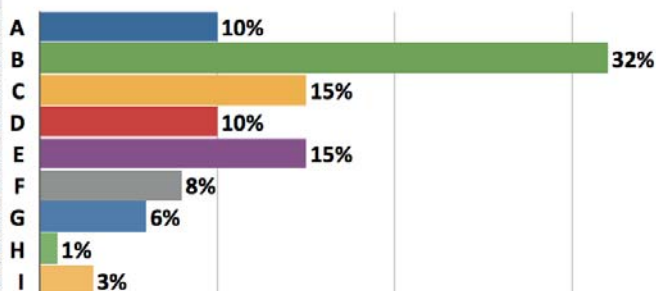
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Graph of Concerns about Peer Relationships

The third URC IOA category addresses peer and collegial relationships, and pertinent questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.) The tally is as follows:

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

	count	percentage
A Priorities, Values, & Beliefs	14	10%
B Respect & Treatment	43	32%
C Trust & Integrity	21	15%
D Reputation	13	10%
E Communication	21	15%
F Bullying & Mobbing	10	8%
G Diversity-related	8	6%
H Retaliation	1	1%
I Physical Violence	3	3%
Total	134	100%

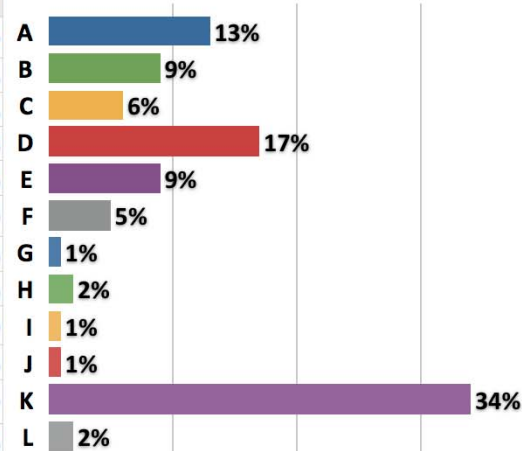


Graph of Concerns about Career Progression and Development

The fourth IOA URC category identifies career progression and development, and correlating questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, and what it entails (e.g., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and termination.) The tally is as follows:

CAREER PROGRESSION & DEVELOPMENT

	count	percentage
A Job Application & Selection	11	13%
B Job Classification & Description	7	9%
C Involuntary Transfer/Change	5	6%
D Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity	14	17%
E Career Progression	7	9%
F Rotation & Duration of Assignment	4	5%
G Resignation	1	1%
H Termination/Non-Renewal	2	2%
I Reemployment of Former/Retired Staff	1	1%
J Position Elimination	1	1%
K Career Development & Mentoring	26	34%
L Other Concerns	2	2%
Total	81	100%



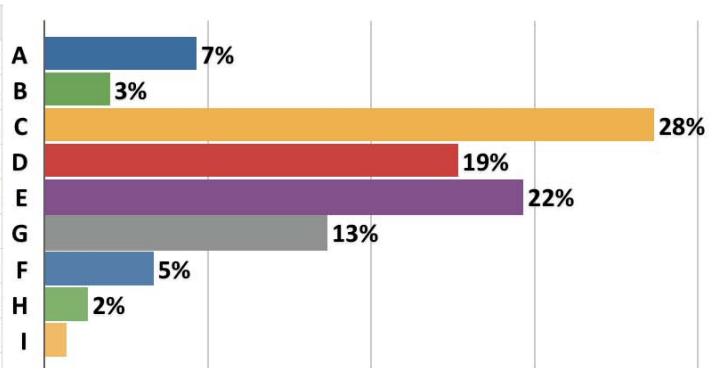
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Graph of Concerns about Legal, Regulatory, and Financial Compliance

The fifth IOA URC category addresses legal, regulatory, and financial compliance, and related questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that may create a legal risk for the organization or its members if not addressed. The tally by the ombuds office is as follows:

LEGAL, REGULATORY, & FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE

	count	percentage
A Criminal Activity	7	7%
B Business & Financial Practices	3	3%
C Harassment	27	28%
D Discrimination	18	19%
E Disability Accommodations	21	22%
F Accessibility	12	13%
G Security of Information	5	5%
H Property Damage	2	2%
I Other Concerns	1	1%
Total	96	100%

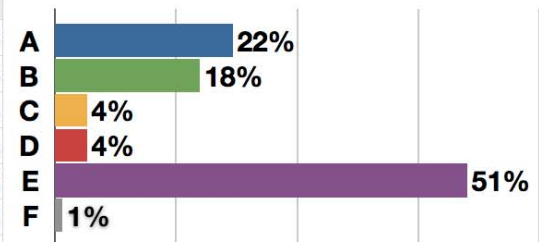


Graph of Concerns about Safety, Health, and the Physical Environment

The sixth IOA URC category relates to safety, health and the physical environment and pertinent questions, concerns, issues or inquiries. The tally by the ombuds office is as follows:

SAFETY, HEALTH, & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	count	percentage
A Safety	15	22%
B Physical Working/Living Conditions	12	18%
C Cleanliness	3	4%
D Security	3	4%
E Work-Life Stress & Balance	34	51%
F Other Concerns	1	1%
Total	68	100%



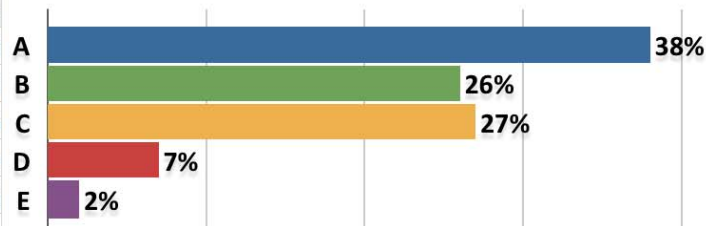
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Graph of Concerns about Service and Administrative Issues

The seventh IOA URC category addresses service and administrative issues, and related questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices. The tally by the ombuds office is as follows:

SERVICE & ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

	count	percentage
A Quality of Services	54	38%
B Responsiveness & Timeliness	37	26%
C Administrative Decisions	38	27%
D Behavior of Service Provider	11	7%
E Other Concerns	3	2%
Total	143	100%

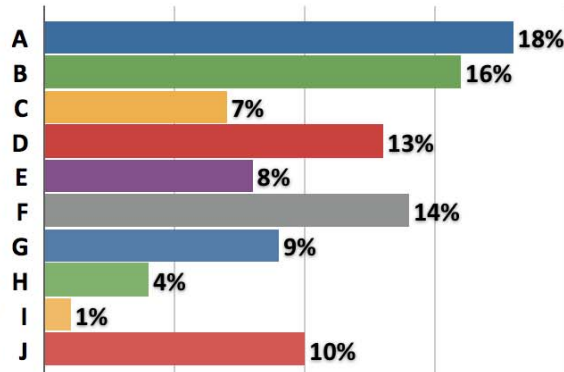


Graph of Concerns about Organizational, Strategic, and Mission-Related Issues

The eighth IOA URC category identifies organizational, strategic, and mission related issues, and pertinent questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of the institution. The ombuds' tally is as follows:

ORGANIZATIONAL & STRATEGIC ISSUES

	count	percentage
A Strategic & Mission Related	23	18%
B Leadership & Management	20	16%
C Use of Positional Power/Authority	9	7%
D Communication	16	13%
E Restructuring and Relocation	10	8%
F Organizational Climate	18	14%
G Change Management	11	9%
H Priority Setting & Funding	5	4%
I Data Methodology & Interpretation	1	1%
J Interdepartmental Disputes	11	10%
Total	124	100%



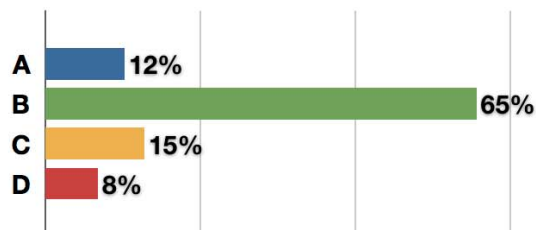
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Graph of Concerns about Institutional Values, Ethics, and Standards

The ninth and final IOA URC category focuses on values, ethics and standards, and questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the fairness of the organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies and/or standards. The ombuds' tally is as follows:

VALUES, ETHICS, & STANDARDS ISSUES

	count	percentage
A Standards of Conduct	3	12%
B Values & Culture	17	65%
C Policies and Procedures	4	15%
D Other Concerns	2	8%
Total	26	100%



Following Up on Concerns

The ombuds confidentially receives all visitors' questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries. The ombuds explains policies, answers questions, and offers options to the visitor. The response of the ombuds is tailored to the dynamics of the situation and the visitor's concerns. The ombuds listens, makes informal inquiries or otherwise reviews matters received, offers resolution options, makes referrals, and mediates disputes independently and impartially. The ombuds assists parties in reaching resolutions that are consistent with the ideals and objectives of the University. Services of the ombuds supplement, but do not supplant, any formal processes available to the University community. The ombuds also provides feedback to the University administrators and others as appropriate, with any trends or issues without identifying any parties to those issues. In addition, the ombuds makes recommendations to the University administrators and others as appropriate, for policy changes, needed training, or other procedures that may enhance the campus climate.

Issues and Trends

The ombuds provides monthly reports to the Provost, and starting January 1, 2010, to the President, to identify in great detail the issues, trends, and recommendations, along with statistics on concerns raised in the nine given reporting categories listed above. This section will analyze the aggregated data as compiled over the twelve-month time period covered in this report.

Evaluative relationships on campus resulted in the greatest number of questions, concerns, issues, and/or conflicts (such as these between supervisors and employees, or professors and students). Three-hundred and eighty-five (385) issues out of one thousand and sixty-nine (1,069) issues were related to evaluative relationships (i.e., 36% of the total). In specific, the

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issues dominated in the areas of respect and treatment, departmental and/or workplace climate, assignments/schedules, priorities, values and beliefs, and supervisory effectiveness.

Three categories follow with approximately the same amount of concerns after the first highest ranked category of evaluative relationships.

1. Service and administrative issues. One hundred and forty-three (143) concerns specifically related to the quality of campus services, the responsiveness and timeliness of such services, and administrative decisions which are non-disciplinary in nature.
2. Peer and colleague relationships. One hundred and thirty-four (134) concerns were raised in the category of peer relationships (such as these relationships which are not supervisory or evaluative in nature, such as two staff members within the same department, or conflict involving members of a student organization.) The area of respect and treatment garnered 32% of the concerns in the category of peer relationships. This is followed by concerns in the areas of trust and integrity, and the quality and/or quantity of communication. Personal coaching and third party intervention services, such as mediation, shuttle diplomacy, and facilitation, were mechanisms often successfully employed to resolve such conflicts.
3. Organizational and strategic issues. One hundred and twenty-four (124) concerns related to the whole or some part of the University regarding demonstrated principles, decisions, and actions, its leadership and management, the institutional climate, and the quality, content, timing, effects, and amount of the institution's communications about policies and strategic issues.

Other notable trends were reflected in the profile of issues as follows:

- In the area of career progression and development, emphasis was strong on the interest of career development and mentoring, including the need of available internships and employment for students, as well as mentoring and professional development opportunities for employees.
- External non-campus related conflicts (such as legal matters, critical domestic crises, discrimination, and medical issues) also resulted in visitors seeking out the ombuds' assistance.
- Issues about student-based disability accessibility and accommodations, diversity-related discrimination (such as different treatment based on gender, race, age, national origin, religion, and/or disability,) and general harassment made up the bulk of the concerns under the category of institutional liability.
- The category of employee compensation and benefits had the least number of concerns. This may mean that, relatively speaking, concerns about the equity, appropriateness, and competitiveness of employee compensation and benefit programs did not come to the attention of the ombuds in great numbers.

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Future Goals and Challenges

The Office of the Ombuds is a conflict management resource for the campus community in order to promote excellence at the University; hence, in order to serve as an effective and invaluable service, the office identifies the following future goals and challenges:

- Continue to conduct activities that ensure effective collaboration with groups, units, and departments which represent the various constituents of the campus community, including students, faculty, staff, students' families, alumni, applicants, and others as appropriate. Such collaboration will assist in clarifying and prioritizing the areas of need which may be met by the Office of the Ombuds and in assessing the programs and services of the campus ombuds.
- Continue to promote comprehensive marketing and orientation workshops, events, and tools in order to apprise the continuously evolving campus community of this relatively novel resource available for their perusal. This may include advertisements in various means of campus media such as the student newspaper, the campus television, banners, and so forth. Also, the office should continue to sponsor the annual International Conflict Resolution Day which falls on the third Thursday of October; the most recent celebration involved an all-student panel which was well-attended.
- Continue with professional development training activities and conferences to ensure that the office adheres to best practices of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and the National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA).
- Address the need for administrative support for logistical and administrative purposes (such as office supplies, logistics for events and workshops, general report development and dissemination, student payroll and hours, office's anonymous database, travel plans, and social media marketing.) .
- Address the need for appropriate office space that ensures multiple exit points, adequate visibility, privacy, and proximity to pedestrian traffic.

Should you have any questions, concerns, or thoughts you would like to share about this inaugural report, please do not hesitate to contact the ombuds.

Appendices

IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (URC).....	Appendix A
Office of the Ombuds Intake Form.....	Appendix B
IOA Code of Ethics.....	Appendix C
IOA Standards of Practice.....	Appendix D

Appendix A: IOA Uniform Reporting Categories



INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION Uniform Reporting Categories

VERSION 2
October 2007

1. Compensation & Benefits

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.

- 1.a **Compensation** (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)
- 1.b **Payroll** (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)
- 1.c **Benefits** (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)
- 1.d **Retirement, Pension** (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)
- 1.e **Other** (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above sub-categories)

2. Evaluative Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)

- 2.a **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 2.b **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 2.c **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 2.d **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 2.e **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 2.f **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 2.g **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 2.h **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 2.i **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 2.j **Assignments/Schedules** (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)
- 2.k **Feedback** (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)
- 2.l **Consultation** (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)

2.m Performance Appraisal/Grading

(job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)

- 2.n **Departmental Climate** (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility.)
- 2.o **Supervisory Effectiveness** (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)
- 2.p **Insubordination** (refusal to do what is asked)
- 2.q **Discipline** (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)
- 2.r **Equity of Treatment** (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)
- 2.s **Other** (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)

- 3.a **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 3.b **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 3.c **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 3.d **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 3.e **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 3.f **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 3.g **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 3.h **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 3.i **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 3.j **Other** (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

4. Career Progression and Development

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)

- 4.a **Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes** (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)
- 4.b **Job Classification and Description** (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)
- 4.c **Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment** (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)
- 4.d **Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity** (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories)
- 4.e **Career Progression** (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)
- 4.f **Rotation and Duration of Assignment** (non-completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)
- 4.g **Resignation** (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)
- 4.h **Termination/Non-Renewal** (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)
- 4.i **Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff** (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)
- 4.j **Position Elimination** (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)
- 4.k **Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring** (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)
- 4.l **Other** (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above sub-categories)

5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse.

- 5.a **Criminal Activity** (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)
- 5.b **Business and Financial Practices** (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)
- 5.c **Harassment** (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)
- 5.d **Discrimination** (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc. [being part of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category – applies in the U.S.])
- 5.e **Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation** (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)
- 5.f **Accessibility** (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)
- 5.g **Intellectual Property Rights** (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)
- 5.h **Privacy and Security of Information** (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)
- 5.i **Property Damage** (personal property damage, liabilities)
- 5.j **Other** (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

- 6.a **Safety** (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for training and equipment)
- 6.b **Physical Working/Living Conditions** (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)
- 6.c **Ergonomics** (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)
- 6.d **Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)
- 6.e **Security** (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying "compromise of classified or top secret" information)

- 6.f **Telework/Flexplace** (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)
- 6.g **Safety Equipment** (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)
- 6.h **Environmental Policies** (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)
- 6.i **Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance** (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)
- 6.j **Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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7. Services/Administrative Issues

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

- 7.a **Quality of Services** (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)
- 7.b **Responsiveness/Timeliness** (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)
- 7.c **Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules** (impact of non-disciplinary decisions, decisions about requests for administrative and academic services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)
- 7.d **Behavior of Service Provider(s)** (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)
- 7.e **Other** (any services or administrative issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

- 8.a **Strategic and Mission-Related/ Strategic and Technical Management** (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)
- 8.b **Leadership and Management** (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)

- 8.c **Use of Positional Power/Authority** (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)
- 8.d **Communication** (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)
- 8.e **Restructuring and Relocation** (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g. downsizing, off shoring, outsourcing)
- 8.f **Organizational Climate** (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)
- 8.g **Change Management** (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)
- 8.h **Priority Setting and/or Funding** (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)
- 8.i **Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results** (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)
- 8.j **Interdepartmental/Interorganization Work/Territory** (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)
- 8.k **Other** (any organizational issue not described by the above sub-categories)
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.....

9. Values, Ethics, and Standards

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.

- 9.a **Standards of Conduct** (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)
- 9.b **Values and Culture** (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)
- 9.c **Scientific Conduct/Integrity** (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)
- 9.d **Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8** (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)
- 9.e **Other** (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above sub-categories)
.....
.....

Appendix B: Ombuds Intake Form

GU Office of the Ombuds Intake Form

Case Ref.# _____
Electronic Input? ☐

Date of 1st meeting: _____

Visitor Information

Student	Other	Employee
1/2/3/4	Applicant	Faculty
Graduate	Alumni	Staff
ELI	Parents	
Cont. Ed.		
Welcome information provided:		
Visitor referred by:		

Ethnicity	Hearing Status:
Native Am.	Deaf
Asian	HOH
Black/AfrAm	Hearing
Hisp/Latino	
Caucasian	
International	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/>

Description of the issue:

CONFIDENTIAL

Issue Category (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Compensation and benefits (issues about employee compensation, benefits, and other benefit programs.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluative Relationships (i.e., supervisor-employee, faculty-student)
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Relationships (e.g., two staff members, members of student organizations)
<input type="checkbox"/> Career Progression and Development (regarding entering and leaving a job, e.g. recruitment, job security)
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance (potential liability issues, e.g., discrim, fin. abuse, fraud)
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety, Health and Physical Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Service/Administrative Issues (quality of services, incl. conduct, timeliness, responsiveness)
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related (principles, leadership, restructuring, morale, priorities)
<input type="checkbox"/> Values, Ethics and Standards (Standards of Conduct: fairness, need of new policies, Miscellaneous category)

Ombuds Actions (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Listening/Information Only
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving/Evaluating Options for Action/Coaching
<input type="checkbox"/> Mediation or Group Facilitation
<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to:
<input type="checkbox"/> Followed up with feedback/consultation with unit/dept



INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION

IOA CODE OF ETHICS

PREAMBLE

The IOA is dedicated to excellence in the practice of Ombudsman work. The IOA Code of Ethics provides a common set of professional ethical principles to which members adhere in their organizational Ombudsman practice.

Based on the traditions and values of Ombudsman practice, the Code of Ethics reflects a commitment to promote ethical conduct in the performance of the Ombudsman role and to maintain the integrity of the Ombudsman profession.

The Ombudsman shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the organization he or she serves, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of those organizations' practices, processes, and policies.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

INDEPENDENCE

The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

The Ombudsman, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombudsman does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

INFORMALITY

The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.

www.ombudsassociation.org

Appendix D: IOA Standards of Practice

PREAMBLE

The IOA Standards of Practice are based upon and derived from the ethical principles stated in the IOA Code of Ethics.

Each Ombudsman office should have an organizational Charter or Terms of Reference, approved by senior management, articulating the principles of the Ombudsman function in that organization and their consistency with the IOA Standards of Practice.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

INDEPENDENCE

- 1.1 The Ombudsman Office and the Ombudsman are independent from other organizational entities.
- 1.2 The Ombudsman holds no other position within the organization which might compromise independence.
- 1.3 The Ombudsman exercises sole discretion over whether or how to act regarding an individual's concern, a trend or concerns of multiple individuals over time. The Ombudsman may also initiate action on a concern identified through the Ombudsman's direct observation.
- 1.4 The Ombudsman has access to all information and all individuals in the organization, as permitted by law.
- 1.5 The Ombudsman has authority to select Ombudsman Office staff and manage Ombudsman Office budget and operations.

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

- 2.1 The Ombudsman is neutral, impartial, and unaligned.
- 2.2 The Ombudsman strives for impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the treatment of people and the consideration of issues. The Ombudsman advocates for fair and equitably administered processes and does not advocate on behalf of any individual within the organization.
- 2.3 The Ombudsman is a designated neutral reporting to the highest possible level of the organization and operating independent of ordinary line and staff structures. The Ombudsman should not report to nor be structurally affiliated with any compliance function of the organization.
- 2.4 The Ombudsman serves in no additional role within the organization which would compromise the Ombudsman's neutrality. The Ombudsman should not be aligned with any formal or informal associations within the organization in a way that might create actual or perceived conflicts of interest for the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman should have no personal interest or stake in, and incur no gain or loss from, the outcome of an issue.
- 2.5 The Ombudsman has a responsibility to consider the legitimate concerns and interests of all individuals affected by the matter under consideration.
- 2.6 The Ombudsman helps develop a range of responsible options to resolve problems and facilitate discussion to identify the best options.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 The Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality, including the following: The Ombudsman does not reveal, and must not be required to reveal, the identity of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, nor does the Ombudsman reveal information provided in confidence that could lead to the identification of any individual contacting the Ombudsman Office, without that individual's express permission, given in the course of informal discussions with the Ombudsman; the Ombudsman takes specific action related to an individual's issue only with the individual's express permission and only to the extent permitted, and even then at the sole discretion of the Ombudsman, unless such action can be taken in a way that safeguards the identity of the individual contacting the Ombudsman Office. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, and where there is no other reasonable option. Whether this risk exists is a determination to be made by the Ombudsman.
- 3.2 Communications between the Ombudsman and others (made while the Ombudsman is serving in that capacity) are considered privileged. The privilege belongs to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Office, rather than to any party to an issue. Others cannot waive this privilege.
- 3.3 The Ombudsman does not testify in any formal process inside the organization and resists testifying in any formal process outside of the organization regarding a visitor's contact with the Ombudsman or confidential information communicated to the Ombudsman, even if given permission or requested to do so. The Ombudsman may, however, provide general, non-confidential information about the Ombudsman Office or the Ombudsman profession.
- 3.4 If the Ombudsman pursues an issue systemically (e.g., provides feedback on trends, issues, policies and practices) the Ombudsman does so in a way that safeguards the identity of individuals.
- 3.5 The Ombudsman keeps no records containing identifying information on behalf of the organization.
- 3.6 The Ombudsman maintains information (e.g., notes, phone messages, appointment calendars) in a secure location and manner, protected from inspection by others (including management), and has a consistent and standard practice for the destruction of such information.
- 3.7 The Ombudsman prepares any data and/or reports in a manner that protects confidentiality.
- 3.8 Communications made to the ombudsman are not notice to the organization. The ombudsman neither acts as agent for, nor accepts notice on behalf of, the organization and shall not serve in a position or role that is designated by the organization as a place to receive notice on behalf of the organization. However, the ombudsman may refer individuals to the appropriate place where formal notice can be made.

INFORMALITY AND OTHER STANDARDS

- 4.1 The Ombudsman functions on an informal basis by such means as: listening, providing and receiving information, identifying and reframing issues, developing a range of responsible options, and – with permission and at Ombudsman discretion – engaging in informal third-party intervention. When possible, the Ombudsman helps people develop new ways to solve problems themselves.
- 4.2 The Ombudsman as an informal and off-the-record resource pursues resolution of concerns and looks into procedural irregularities and/or broader systemic problems when appropriate.
- 4.3 The Ombudsman does not make binding decisions, mandate policies, or formally adjudicate issues for the organization.
- 4.4 The Ombudsman supplements, but does not replace, any formal channels. Use of the Ombudsman Office is voluntary, and is not a required step in any grievance process or organizational policy.
- 4.5 The Ombudsman does not participate in any formal investigative or adjudicative procedures. Formal investigations should be conducted by others. When a formal investigation is requested, the Ombudsman refers individuals to the appropriate offices or individual.
- 4.6 The Ombudsman identifies trends, issues and concerns about policies and procedures, including potential future issues and concerns, without breaching confidentiality or anonymity, and provides recommendations for responsibly addressing them.
- 4.7 The Ombudsman acts in accordance with the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, keeps professionally current by pursuing continuing education, and provides opportunities for staff to pursue professional training.
- 4.8 The Ombudsman endeavors to be worthy of the trust placed in the Ombudsman Office.