



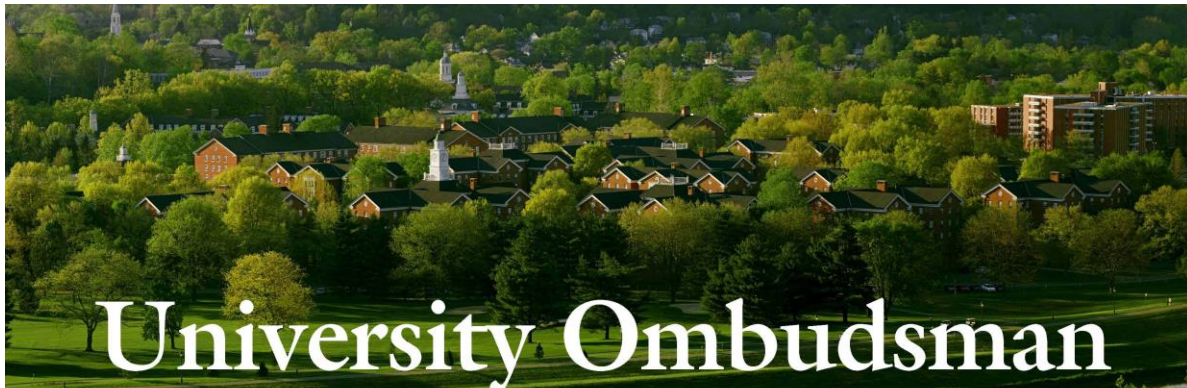
**OFFICE OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OMBUDSMAN**

**2011-2012 Annual Report**

Office of the University Ombudsman  
501 Baker University Center  
Ohio University  
Athens, Ohio 45701  
P: 740-593-2627  
F: 740-593-0675  
[www.ohio.edu/ombuds](http://www.ohio.edu/ombuds)

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# Confidential ■ Neutral Independent ■ Informal

The Ombuds Office is an independent and confidential resource for all students, faculty and staff affiliated with Ohio University, who need assistance on an issue that is internal to the university.

The Ombudsman helps to identify formal and informal avenues for resolving conflicts, and works with visitors to determine the appropriate response for their situation.

The Ombudsman is neutral and does not serve as an advocate for an individual, but as an advocate for fair processes and procedures.

Please contact the office if you need assistance.



**OHIO**  
UNIVERSITY

University Ombudsman  
501 Baker Center  
Ohio University  
Athens, Ohio 45701

p: (740) 593-2627  
f: (740) 593-0675

e: [ombuds@ohio.edu](mailto:ombuds@ohio.edu)  
w: [www.ohio.edu/ombuds](http://www.ohio.edu/ombuds)

## Introduction

This year celebrates the 42nd year of operation for the Ohio University Office of the Ombudsman. One of the critical roles of the Ombudsman is to offer insights to the University community about the patterns and trends related to office visitors and their issues, with the goal of helping this institution respond to issues systematically and fairly. This annual report is one such vehicle for providing this information.

The office was established in the fall of 1970 with the appointment of its first Ombudsman following the campus riots, political unrest and school closing in the spring of that year. The office staffing model has changed over time. Until 2008-09 the Ombudsman was an appointed position and always a tenured member of the faculty; since that time, an administrator has been appointed to the role. From 1994-2005, the office staff included both a part-time Ombudsman and an administrative staff member serving as assistant or associate Ombudsman, as well as limited student support staff. In 2008, the University Ombudsman was a full-time year-round administrator with limited graduate student support for statistical data entry. Since March 2010, the position has been half-time for 11 months of the year. During the past four decades, the following individuals served in the Office of the Ombudsman.

### Ohio University Ombudsman 1970-present

1970-1974:	Dr. Lester Marks, Associate Professor, English
1974-1976:	Dr. Carol Harter, Assistant Professor, English
1977-1982:	Dr. Lester Marks, Associate Professor, English
1982-1991:	Dr. David Heaton, Associate Professor, English
1991-1997	Dr. Nancy Bain, Professor, Geography Dianne Bouvier, M.A., M.B.A., Assistant Ombuds
1997-2002:	Dr. Butch Hill, Professor, Engineering Dianne Bouvier, M.A., M.B.A., Assistant Ombuds
2002-2007:	Dr. Elizabeth Graham, Professor, Communication Studies Dr. Katherine Ziff, Associate Ombudsman
2008-2010:	Merle Graybill, M Ed., LSW
2010-present:	Dianne Bouvier, M.A., M.B.A., A.B.D.

### The Ombudsman Profession

The Ombudsman's field continues to evolve toward a profession with training standards, a code of ethics, standards of practice, and a growing body of research and literature, all facilitated by the International Ombudsman Association (IOA), which is a membership organization. This evolution of the field, coupled with changing and increasingly intricate case law on the role of an academic Ombudsman's office in regard to matters such as confidentiality, duty to warn, harassment and notice to the institution, obliges the University to support continuous professional development for its Ombudsman. At Ohio University, the Ombudsman follows the "organizational ombudsman" model. In 2009 the IOA implemented a voluntary

certification process for professionals in the Ombudsman role. This certification is worth pursuing in order to legitimize this position.

### **Goals, Role, and Activities**

The Ombudsman provides services with these goals in mind:

- Fostering respect across the university community
- Promoting and facilitating effective communication between constituents
- Promoting procedural fairness, equity, and clarity
- Increasing retention of students, faculty and staff
- Saving administrative time

As outlined in the International Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice, the nature of the role of the “organizational ombudsman” is best characterized by the words independent, confidential, neutral, and informal.

**Confidentiality** - No identifying records of interactions with visitors are kept, and no information is revealed unless the visitor provides permission to do so, and the Ombudsman agrees to this. Each visitor is informed that the only exceptions are cases of imminent harm to self or others.

**Neutrality** - The Ombuds strives to understand all perspectives in a situation and seeks outcomes that balance the needs of individuals with the requirements of the institution. The Ombuds serves as an advocate for fair processes and procedures.

**Independence** – In order to minimize conflicts of interest, the office is placed outside of the University's formal lines of authority. The Ombuds is empowered to seek information as needed and to craft solutions toward the overall good when possible. The Ombuds reports to the Provost, to provide insight about overall trends within the university.

**Informality** – For the purpose of providing informality, the office does not receive or act upon official complaints, grievances or legal matters, nor can the Ombudsman require an action of any party. The Ombuds helps to identify formal and informal avenues for resolving conflicts, and works with visitors to determine the appropriate response for their situation.

## **Anticipatory and Responsive**

The usual activities of the Office of the Ombudsman are both anticipatory and responsive:

### **Anticipatory**

- Maintaining proactive interface with individuals and units such as UHR, OIE, OUPD, Senates, Legal Affairs, and University leaders
- Recommending changes to policy and procedure as needed
- Alerting our community to developing issues and concerns

### **Responsive**

- Receiving and attending to the concerns of visitors to the office
- Communicating with constituents through presentations, resource fairs and other events
- Disseminating “snapshots” of our community through annual reports and website content

## **Activities of the Ombudsman**

The academic year of 2011-2012 was an active one for the Ombudsman.

### **Internal**

- Edited and distributed print materials to inform the community about services – brochure, bookmarks, grade appeal guide
- Attended Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Annual Conference Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing Future (November 2011).
- Attended the International Ombudsman Association conference, “Join the Conversation: Learn. Share. Grow.” (April 2012).
- Hired graduate student to assist with annual report data preparation
- Completed Harassment and Discrimination Training (on-line)

### **Outreach**

- Met with new officials and office contacts around the University to introduce myself as the Ombudsman and discuss the office’s purpose
- Met with Learning Community students about role of the office
- Presented at Women in Student Affairs (WISA) meeting on “Critical Mass”
- Participated in the new International Student Orientation (2011-2012)
- Provided information for campus brochures (i.e., Student Senate Resource Information, University College Ohio University Experience publication)
- Provided information bookmarks to UHR for new Employee Orientations
- Assisted 234 visitors to the office with their concerns

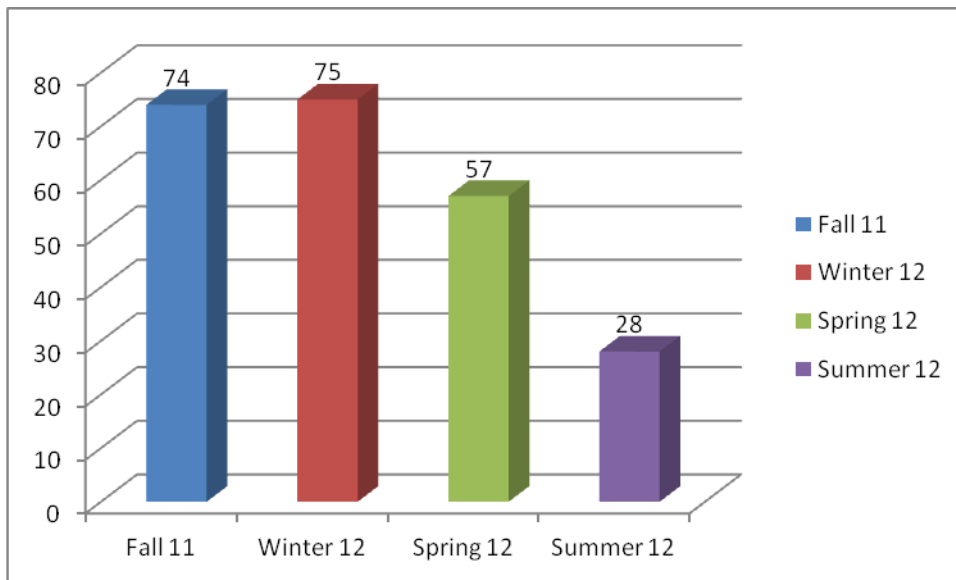
## Services of the Ombudsman

The rest of this report describes (1) the issues and concerns that were brought forth and the interventions of the Ombudsman, (2) the people who contacted the Ombudsman, and (3) the people and areas with whom they had concerns or issues. Included as well are the Ombudsman's recommendations for issues warranting future attention from the University. Throughout the report the category of N/A is used to indicate information that was not available or not applicable.

### Overview of Services

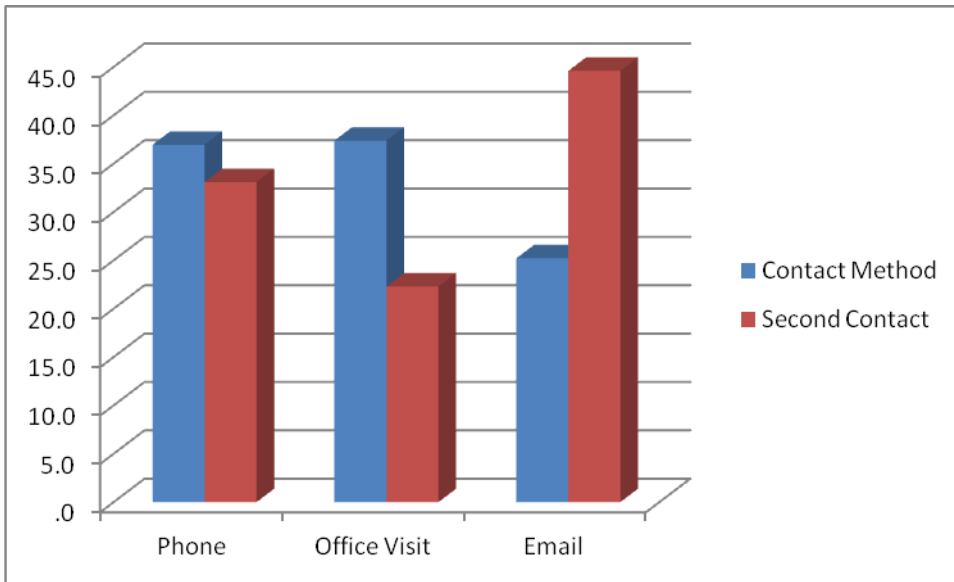
Information was collected on 234 situations that the Ombudsman was presented with by visitors to the office during the academic year 2011-2012, as shown in Table 1 below. This represents a 14% increase since the previous year. Fall and winter quarters show the greatest number of cases. With next year's conversion to semesters, this annual report represents the final academic year with the quarter reporting cycle (fall, winter, spring, summer). Brief and casual interactions that happen by phone, on the escalator, and on the street are also not included. The more formal requests for service often called for talking with other people, and so the total number of contacts to address situations far exceeds 234 people.

**Table 1: Number of Cases by Quarter 2011-2012**



Visitors contact the office by various means. As shown in Table 2, most initial contacts were made by phone (37%) or email (37%); and most subsequent contacts were by email (44%). This increase in email usage is representative of the current culture.

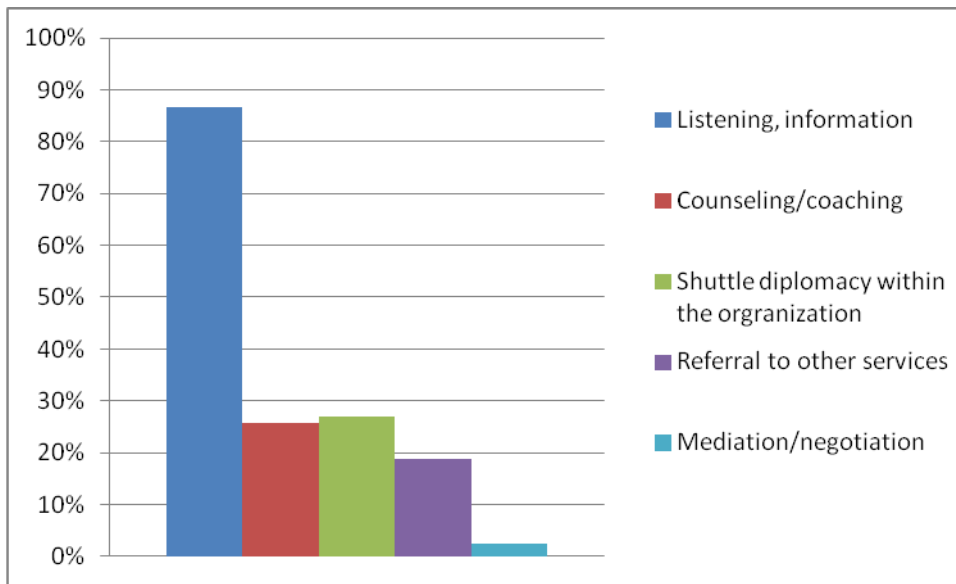
**Table 2: Initial and Follow-up Means of Contact (percentages)**



Many visitors come to the Ombuds Office to explain their concerns, be heard, seek advice and/or information, and/or gain a new perspective. While it is common perception that the Ombudsman frequently conducts mediations, visitors often elect to resolve issues on their own after consultation. In some cases, mediations are referred to the Athens Area Mediation Service so that their conversation can be facilitated by persons unconnected to the University. Table 3 reflects the Types of Interventions most requested by visitors; most cases require a combination of interventions, along with researching policies, practices and norms related to the inquiry.



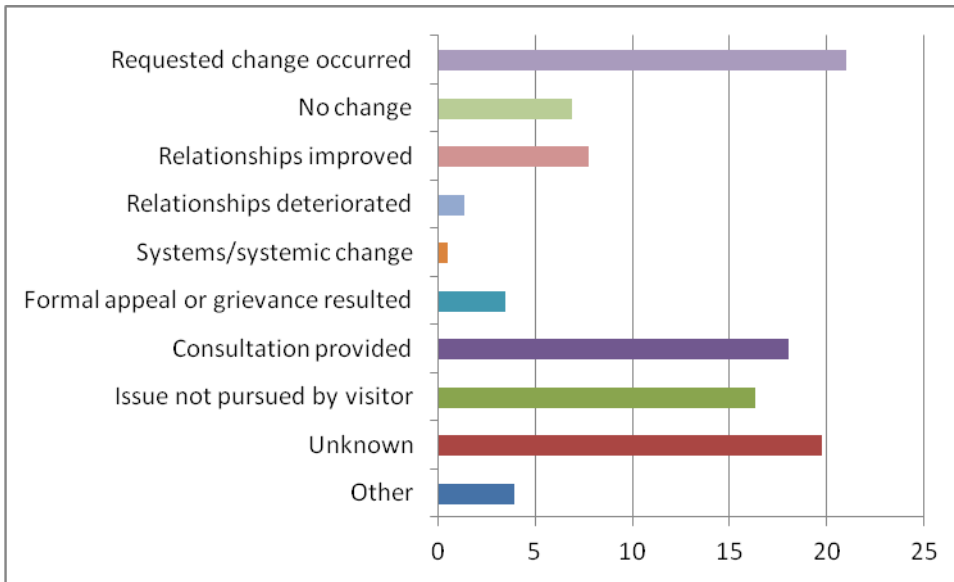
**Table 3: Type of Intervention (percentage)**



The Outcomes of Cases in Table 4 provides general outcomes for visitors. In some cases, there may have been more than one outcome. A new category was added this year, “Consultation provided,” to reflect the visitor who seeks policy advice and answers about procedures; often these visitors feel comfortable addressing their own situations, but seek a confidential way to gather information. Not all issues have a positive resolution, and in many cases the final result is unknown. One reason for this is that when students or employees are experiencing a stressful campus climate, they may have reasons not to pursue their issue. In these cases, the Ombuds Office is an appropriate place to discuss issues, allowing them to be safely relayed without fear of retaliation. When issues can be addressed within departments or with individuals in a manner that protects the confidentiality of visitors, they are so addressed.

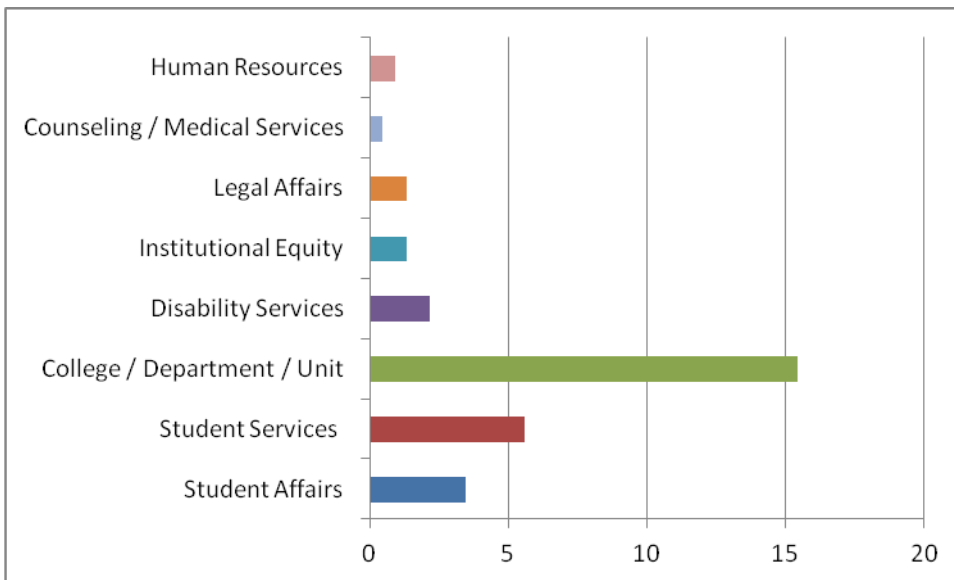
It is also worth noting that the “best” or “most fair” solution may be “no change” or “Issue not pursued by the visitor.” In many cases visitors are seeking remedy for their situation, but they may not have complete information. Finding out the missing links clarifies that procedures were followed fairly and appropriately, which, in itself, also relieves stress. Often people need a safe space to think out loud and not necessarily to plan an action. The ombuds office fulfills that need.

**Table 4: Outcomes of Cases (percentages)**



Many issues could not be resolved without the cooperation of individuals in other units; Table 5 reflects the inter-relatedness of our campus. The Ombudsman appreciates the prompt and attentive support received throughout the year in responding to the issues brought forward.

**Table 5: Offices involved in intervention (percentages)**



## Nature of Issues and Concerns Brought to the Ombudsman

Data about the nature of issues and concerns brought to the Ombudsman were collected in two ways. A case-by-case notation was made of the type of relationship between the visitor with a concern and the person or area of the University with which they had this concern. An accumulative tally of types of issues was kept using a data reporting tool developed by the International Ombudsman Association, which is called the Uniform Reporting Categories for Issues/Concerns. Situations that involve multiple “categories” or “issues,” or that are simultaneously brought forth by one or more people, are counted once in the tally of cases. The number of circumstances and issues exceeds the 234 total “cases.” The nature of these concerns is presented in the pages that follow.

Although numbers and descriptive statistics present one form of office activity, it is the stories and situations that truly reflect the depth and complexity of the office cases. Not all stories can be represented, as they could compromise the visitor’s confidentiality. A broad anecdotal perspective regarding issues presented during this year points to the following university-wide problems:

- Increased expansion of on-line education offerings present technological and administrative challenges for students, faculty and staff.
- Faculty and department chairs are challenged by how to respond effectively to what they perceive as uncivil, non-collegial behavior within their department
- Lack of clear, consistent university-wide family-leave policies continues to negatively impact faculty and graduate students
- Growth of eLearning student enrollments creates dissatisfaction with processes. Along with the expansion of eLearning offerings, concerns continue about on-line academic dishonesty, student services processes, technology difficulties, and e-classroom “behavior.”
- Academic dishonesty is not responded to uniformly across the university. Faculty and students are frustrated with the status quo. Students often have an added complication when financial aid or scholarships are impacted.
- Some graduate students report feeling vulnerable and experience difficulties when issues are compounded by departmental politics.
- Lack of understanding of disability processes for students and faculty on how to assist students in appropriately requesting accommodations in a timely fashion. There is continued need for educating managers and supervisors about providing appropriate disability accommodations in the workplace.

## Ohio University Office of the Ombudsman

### Uniform Reporting Categories International Ombudsman Association

**Questions, Concerns, Issues or Inquiries where Information or Options are Explored (2011-2012)**

Category	Number	Percent
1 <b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
1.a <b>Compensation</b> (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)	1	50%
1.b <b>Payroll</b> (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)	1	50%
1.c <b>Benefits</b> (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)		0%
1.d <b>Retirement, Pension</b> (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)		0%
1.e <b>Other</b> (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above categories) Please specify below:		0%
2 <b>Evaluative Relationships</b> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>49.7%</b>
2.a <b>Priorities, Values, Beliefs</b> (differences about what should be considered important - or most important –often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)	2	1%
2.b <b>Respect, Treatment</b> (demonstrations of inappropriate behavior, disregard for people, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)	38	21%
2.c <b>Trust, Integrity</b> (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)	1	1%
2.d <b>Reputation</b> (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)	4	2%
2.e <b>Communication</b> (quality and/or quantity of communication)	6	3%
2.f <b>Bullying, Mobbing</b> (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)	4	2%
2.g <b>Diversity-Related</b> (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)	4	2%
2.h <b>Retaliation</b> (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)	6	3%

2.i	<b>Physical Violence</b> (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)		0%
2.j	<b>Assignments, Schedules</b> (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)	3	2%
2.k	<b>Feedback</b> (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)	1	1%
2.l	<b>Consultation</b> (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)	31	17%
2.m	<b>Performance Appraisal/Grading</b> (job performance in formal or informal evaluation)	7	4%
2.n	Grading (academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)	31	17%
2.o	<b>Departmental Climate</b> (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility)	7	4%
2.p	<b>Supervisory Effectiveness</b> (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)	7	4%
2.q	<b>Insubordination</b> (refusal to do what is asked)		0%
2.r	<b>Discipline</b> (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)	7	4%
2.s	<b>Equity of Treatment</b> (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)	1	1%
2.t	<b>Other</b> (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above categories) Please specify below: Other 1:Academic issues	20	11%
<b>3 Career Progression and Development</b> 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.)			
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>4.4%</b>
3.a	<b>Job Application, Selection and Recruitment Processes</b> (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)	3	19%
3.b	<b>Job Classification and Description</b> (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)		0%
3.c	<b>Involuntary Transfer, Change of Assignment</b> (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)		0%
3.d	<b>Tenure-Position Security, Ambiguity</b> (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories), Career Progression (Promotion, Reappointment, or Tenure)	2	13%
3.e	<b>Career Progression</b> (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)	2	13%

3.f	<b>Rotation and Duration of Assignment</b> (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)		0%
3.g	<b>Resignation</b> (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)		0%
3.h	<b>Termination/Non-Renewal</b> (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)	8	50%
3.i	<b>Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff</b> (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)		0%
3.j	<b>Position Elimination</b> (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)		0%
3.k	<b>Career Development/Coaching/Mentoring</b> (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)		0%
3.l	<b>Other</b> (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	1	6%
<b>4</b> <b>Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance</b> 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.			
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>11.3%</b>
4.a	<b>Criminal Activity</b> (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)		0%
4.b	<b>Business and Financial Practices</b> (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)		0%
4.c	<b>Harassment</b> (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video, psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)	3	7%
4.d	<b>Discrimination</b> (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.]	2	5%
4.e	<b>Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation</b> (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)	31	76%
4.f	<b>Accessibility</b> (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)	1	2%
4.g	<b>Intellectual Property Rights</b> (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)	1	2%
4.h	<b>Privacy and Security of Information</b> (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)	1	2%
4.i	<b>5.i. Property Damage</b> (personal property damage, liabilities)		
4.j	<b>Other</b> (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	2	5%

5 <b>Safety, Health, and Physical Environment</b> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.			
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
5.a	<b>Safety</b> (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for safety training and equipment)	4	57%
5.b	<b>Physical Working/Living Conditions</b> (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)	1	14%
5.c	<b>Ergonomics</b> (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)		0%
5.d	<b>Cleanliness</b> (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)		0%
5.e	<b>Security</b> (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)		0%
5.f	<b>Telework, Flexplace</b> (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)		0%
5.g	<b>Safety Equipment</b> (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)		0%
5.h	<b>Environmental Policies</b> (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)		0%
5.i	<b>Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance</b> (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)	1	14%
5.j	<b>Other</b> (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	1	14%
6 <b>Services/Administrative Issues</b> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.			
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>97</b>	<b>26.8%</b>
6.a	<b>Quality of Services</b> (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)	10	10%
6.b	<b>Responsiveness, Timeliness</b> (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)	11	11%
6.c	<b>Administrative Decisions and Interpretation, Application of Rules</b> (decisions about requests for academic or administrative services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)	69	71%
6.d	<b>Behavior of Service Provider(s)</b> (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, eg., rude, inattentive, or impatient)		0%
6.e	Course availability; completing degree in timely fashion	3	3%

6.f	<b>Other</b> (any services or administrative issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	4	4%
<b>7</b> <b>Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related</b> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.			
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
7.a	<b>Strategic and Mission-Related, Strategic and Technical Management</b> (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)		0%
7.b	<b>Leadership and Management</b> (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)		0%
7.c	<b>Use of Positional Power, Authority</b> (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)		0%
7.d	<b>Communication</b> (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)		0%
7.e	<b>Restructuring and Relocation</b> (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, eg. downsizing, offshoring, outsourcing)	1	100%
7.f	<b>Organizational Climate</b> (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)		0%
7.g	<b>Change Management</b> (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)		0%
7.h	<b>Priority Setting and/or Funding</b> (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)		0%
7.i	<b>Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results</b> (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)		0%
7.j	<b>Interdepartment, Interorganization Work, Territory</b> (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)		0%
7.k	<b>Other</b> (any organizational issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:		0%
<b>8</b>			
<b>Values, Ethics, and Standards</b> 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.			
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>5.0%</b>
8.a	<b>Standards of Conduct</b> (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)	16	89%
8.b	<b>Values and Culture</b> (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)		0%

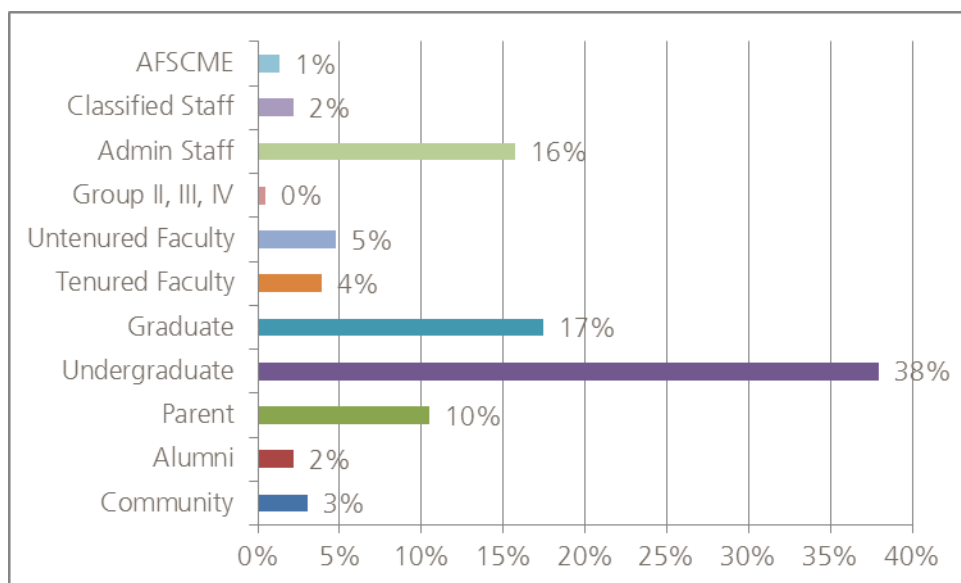


8.c	<b>Scientific Conduct, Integrity</b> (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)	1	6%
8.d	<b>Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8</b> (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, eg., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)	1	6%
8.e	<b>Other</b> (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above categories) Please specify below:		0%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>362</b>	

## Visitors to the Office

The Ombuds Office continues to see visitors that represent a cross-section of campus constituents, including every employment and student group, and with representation from all campuses, colleges, and distance education. The following tables represent the visitor's affiliation, campus, gender, race, affiliated unit, and the relationship between the visitor and person/area of concern. Overall changes from the 2010-2011 Annual Report to this reporting cycle will be noted.

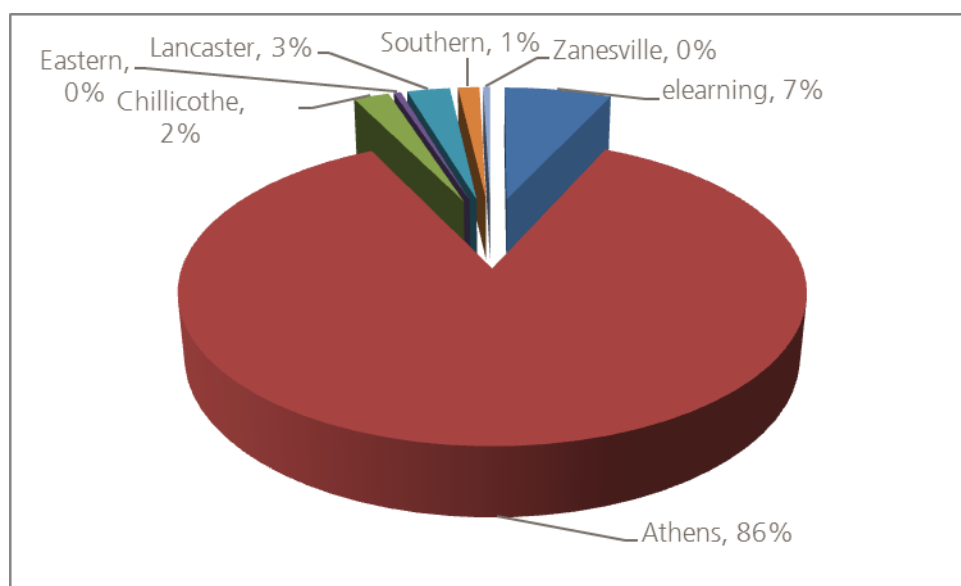
**Table 6: Visitor's Affiliation (percent of total)**



Visitors with the following affiliations had the largest percentage increases from previous year: parents (from 7% to 10%) and graduate students (from 14% to 17%).

Visitors with the following affiliations decreased in percentage from last year: Administrators (20% to 16%) and Tenured and Tenure Track Faculty (from 11% to 9%).

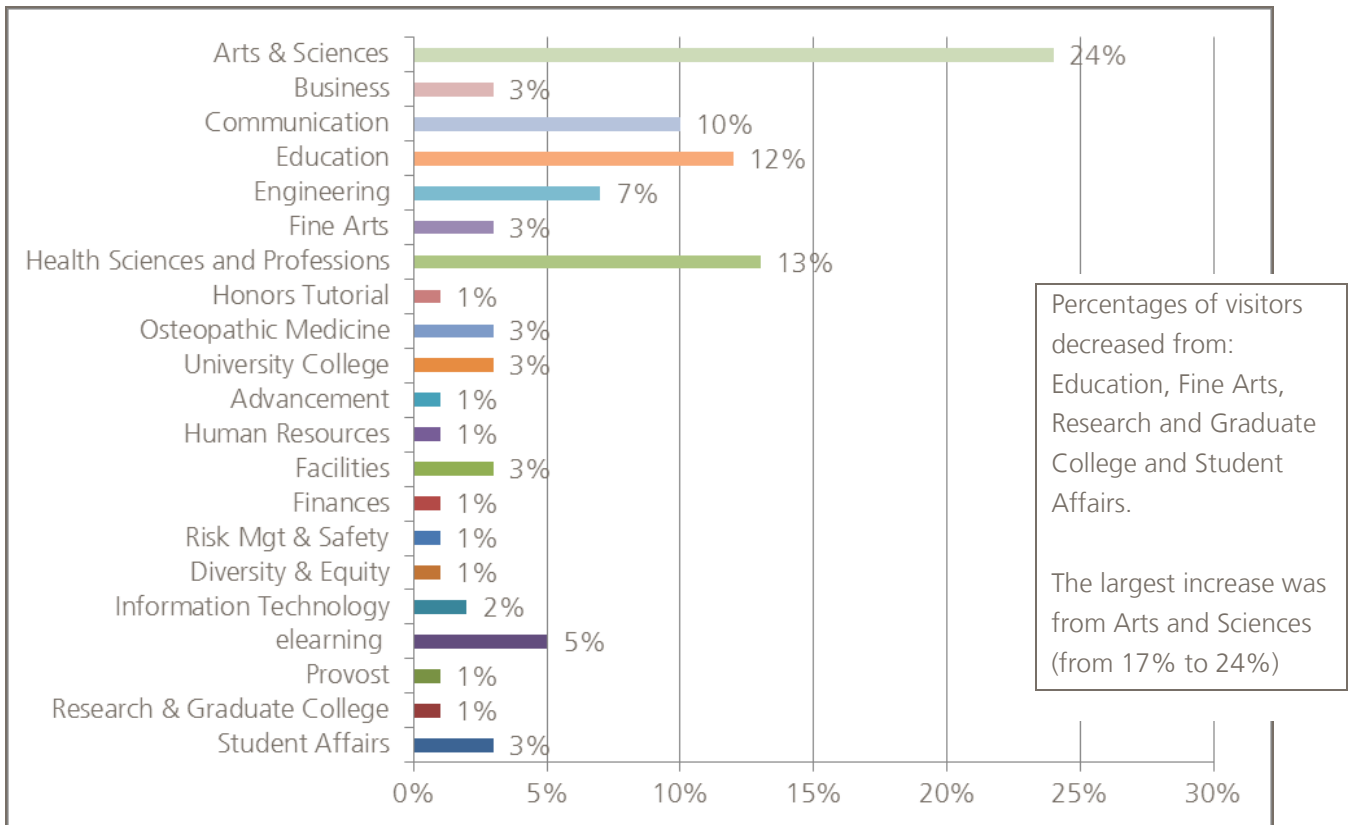
**Table 7: Visitor's Campus (percent of total)**



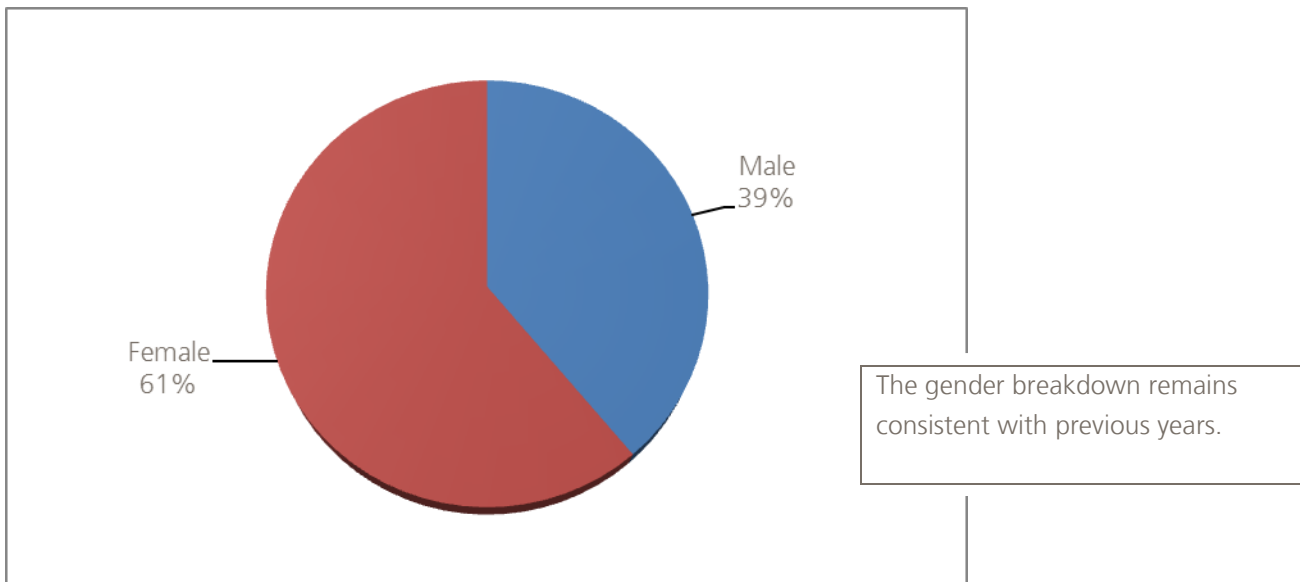
There was an increase in "elearning" visitors, representing 6% of cases in 2010-2011 and 7% of cases in 2011 - 2012.

The largest decrease was from Chillicothe (from 6% to 2% of cases).

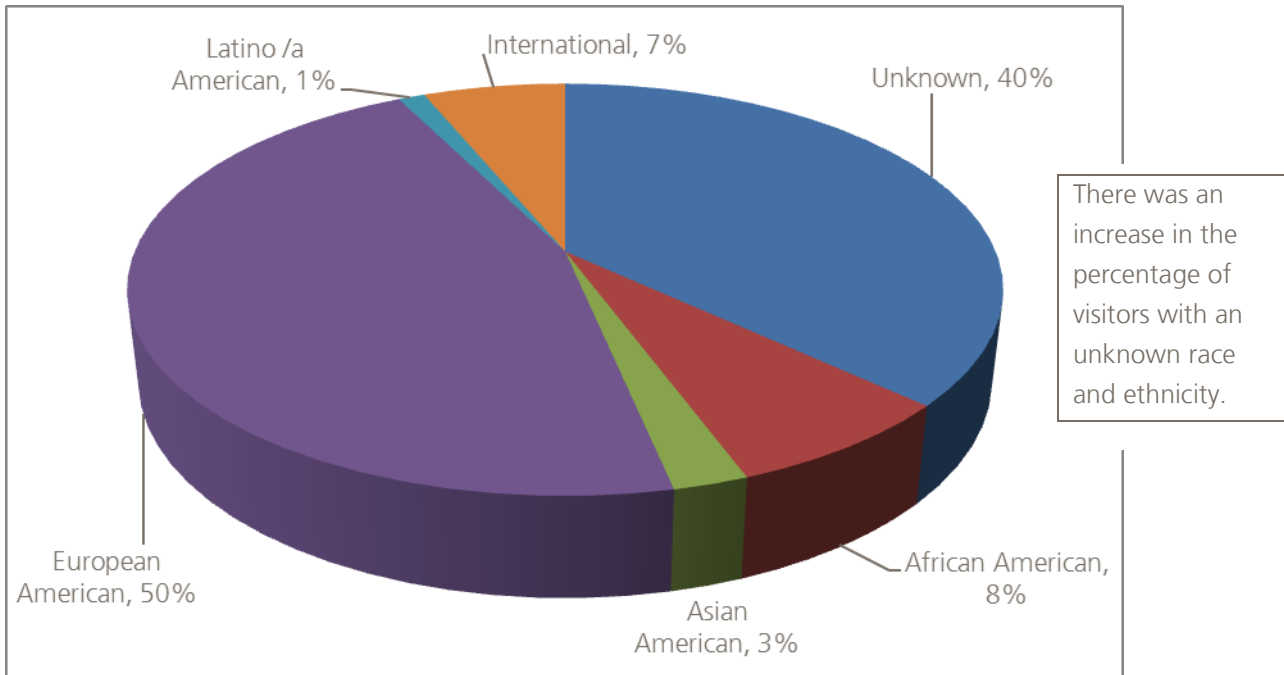
**Table 8: Visitor's Academic or Support Unit (percent of total)**



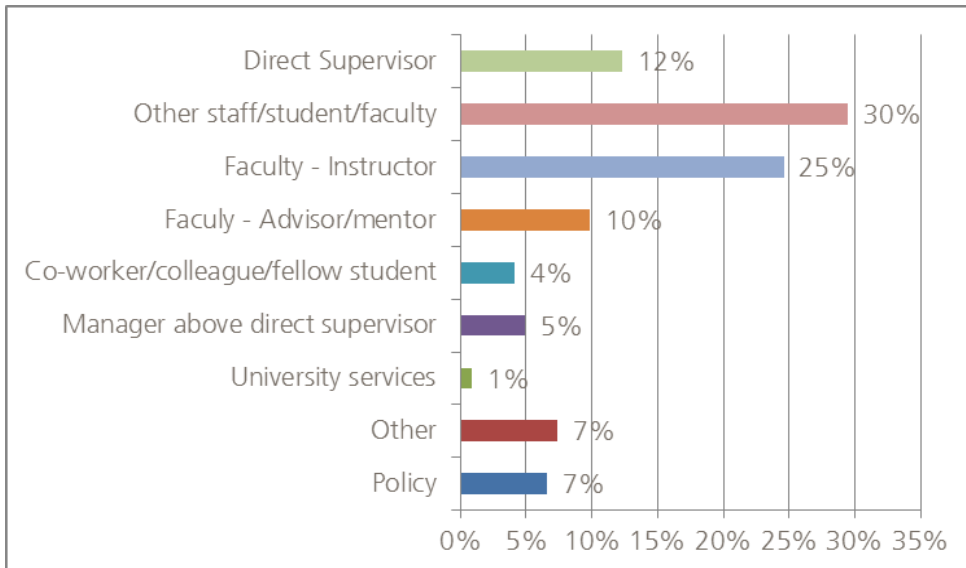
**Table 9: Visitor's Gender (percent of total)**



**Table 10: Visitor's Race/Ethnicity (percent of total)**



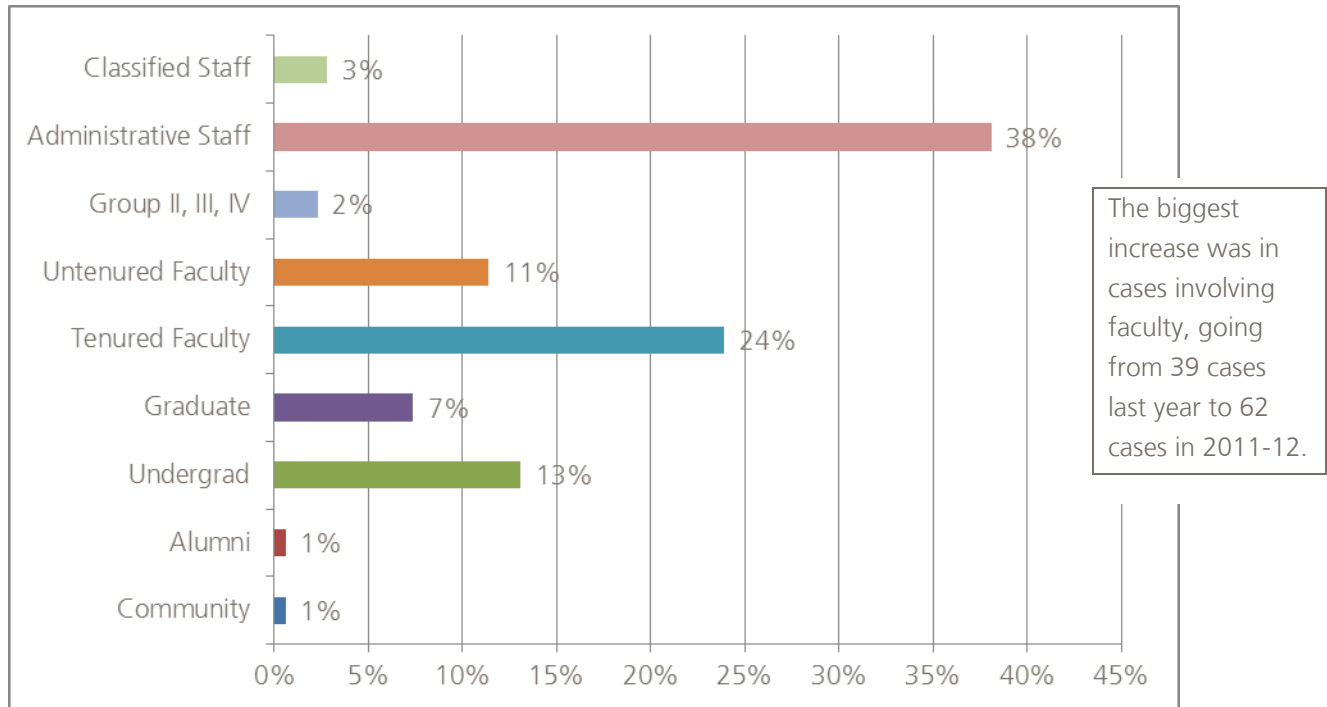
**Table 11: Relationship between Visitor and Person/Area of Concern (percent of total)**



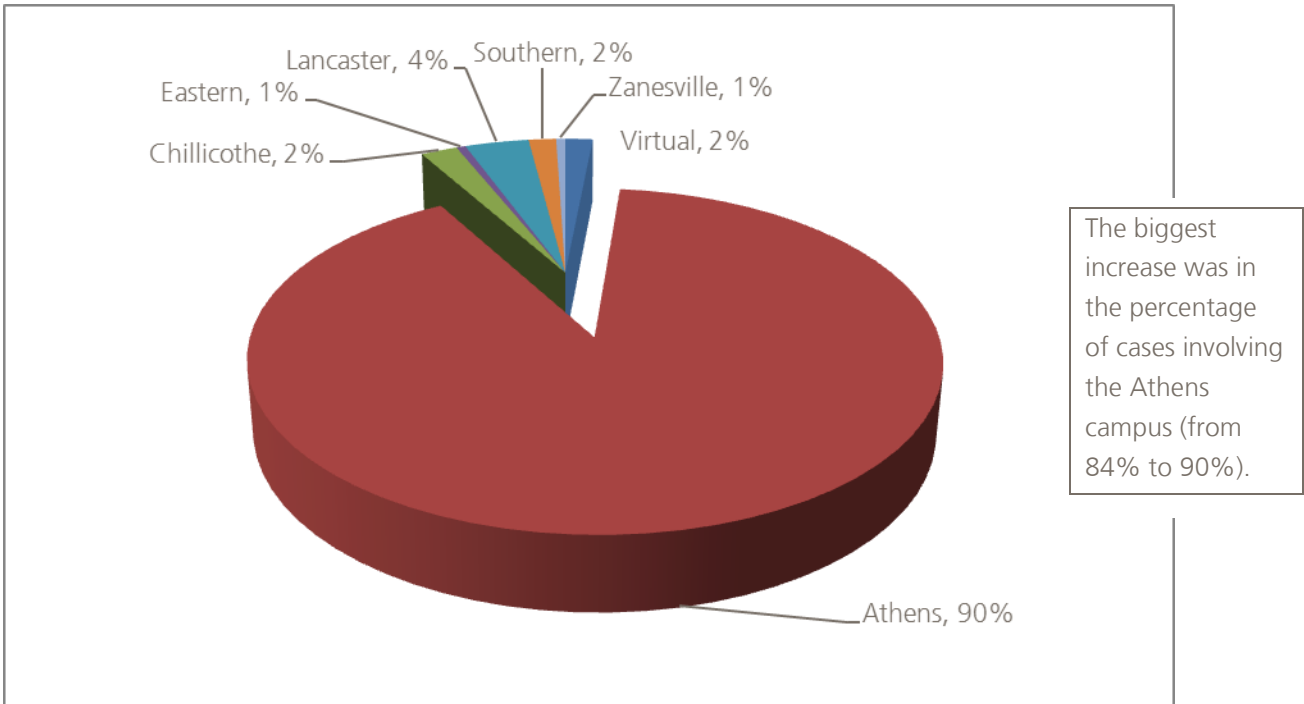
## Persons or Units of Concern

The following section shows data about the people, units or services with whom or about whom visitors had concerns or issues. Tables represent University affiliation, unit within the University structure, campus, gender, and ethnicity.

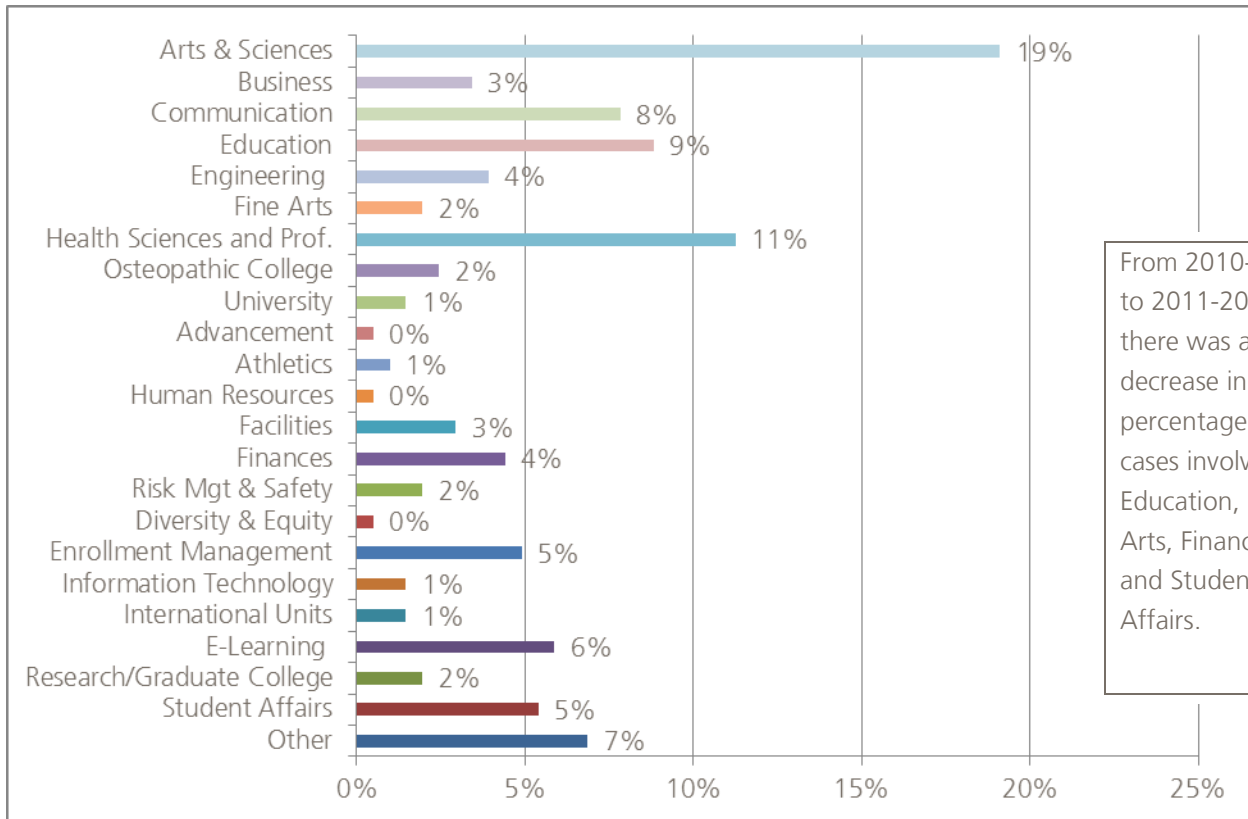
**Table 12: Person of Concern’s Affiliation (percent of total)**



**Table 13: Person/Area of Concern's Campus (percent of total)**

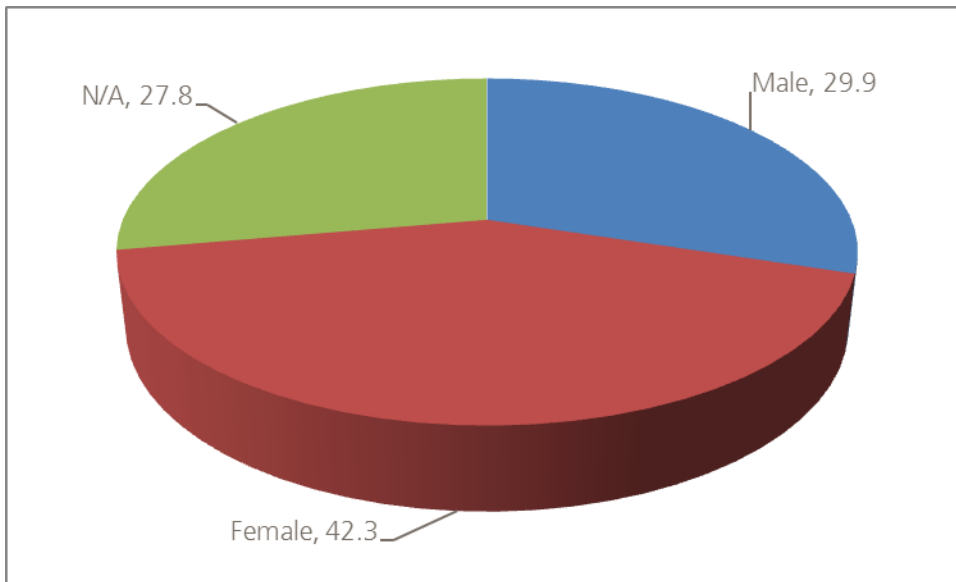


**Table 14: Person/area of concern's unit (percent of total)**



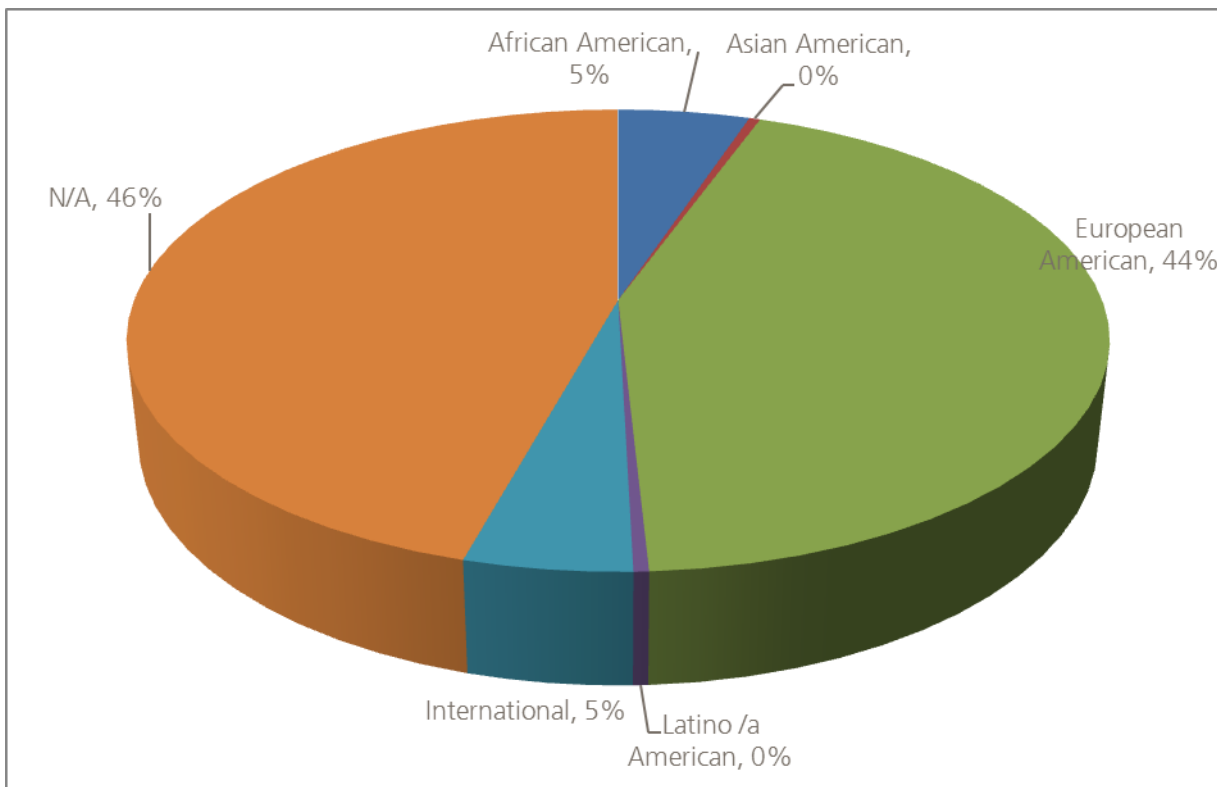
From 2010-2011 to 2011-2012 there was a decrease in the percentage of cases involving Education, Fine Arts, Finances, and Student Affairs.

**Table 15: Person/Area of Concern's Gender (percent of total)**



N/A cases are related to a policy or department than to a person. The N/A percentages have decreased since last year, and females have increased.

**Table 16: Person/Area of Concern's Race/ethnicity (percent of total)**





## Analysis and Recommendations

A comparison of the data from this year with the 2010-2011 data and annual report highlight some changes and some continuing issues.

During the past three years, the caseload has involved the following number of cases: 236 in 2009-2010; 206 in 2011-2012; and 234 in 2012-2013.

The caseload and the part-time status of the position continue to pose challenges to developing the pro-active professional capacity and service of the office and limit the office's ability to provide up-to-date reports to the university community and recommendations to departments for systemic changes. Visitors contact the office continually throughout the 12 months, delaying the ability to respond quickly when the office is closed.

Consistent with previous years, over half of the cases concern evaluative relationships such as perceptions of treatment, grade appeals, communication, supervisory effectiveness, performance assessments, peer-to-peer relationships, department climate, and bullying.

This past year marks the final preparation year for the quarters-to-semesters transition. Very few cases emerged as a result of this very comprehensive task. Changes in federal guidelines for Title IX reporting and increased federal expectations on providing accommodations in the academic and workplace environments pose challenges and opportunities for creating a more inclusive environment. During times of stress and change, there is a need for intentional kindness by all parties.

The following are an analysis of issues and recommendations for the university community:

### Employees

#### Faculty

Faculty sought assistance from the ombuds office in having one-on-one conversations with students to clarify misunderstandings and expectations.

The ombuds serves in a consultation role for faculty and staff on pregnant student issues, civility in the classroom, tenure and promotion appeal policies, equitable research grant distribution, collegiality, and supervisor workplace issues. One recommendation is that in-person training or facilitated discussions occur at the committee level about the best practices and expectations in tenure & promotion deliberations and hiring, including protocol for responding to inappropriate comments made during these processes.

## Administrators

Employees consult on various issues without seeking direct remedy or intervention. Administrators seek advice on how to effectively communicate with co-workers, how to be considered for promotion, how to respond to poor performance reviews, mobility issues, and perceptions of unfair hiring or promotion processes. Some male employees have difficulty with their female supervisors' style of managing an office. Training on leadership and communication styles may be helpful for some units.

## Classified and Bargaining Unit Staff

Decreased numbers of support staff and increased output expectations lead to increased numbers of errors, safety concerns, protocols that fail to be updated, and increased disciplinary responses.

## Students

### Undergraduates

It is worth noting that Learning Communities are seeking to address some plagiarism issues by incorporating academic honesty into its protocol. Lack of knowledge about appropriate citations in an age of increased ease of "cut and paste" through technology continues to lead to unintentional plagiarism. Annually, the ombuds appreciates the opportunity to meet enthusiastic students involved in the Learning Communities.

Like faculty, students sought assistance with having one-on-one conversations about course expectations, grading, and respect.

An increased number of students are having financial difficulties in continuing in school. The student's failure to "pay off" bills results in institutional holds on his or her records. Accounts are eventually forwarded to the Attorney General's Office and collection processes and additional fees result. Increased education on payment scheduling options and the long-term consequences of failure to pay could alleviate some of the added hardship.

As fees increase, more students and parents question the costs and ethics around course material fees, royalty fees, on-line "access" fees, and technology fees. While in-depth information is available through the Bursar's Office, a more effective communication strategy related to fees should be considered.

### Graduate Students

Graduate students, often vulnerable to departmental politics and power dynamics, have concerns about intellectual property, dissertation committee issues, difficulties in finding advisors interested in their dissertation topic, dismissal from academic programs, and conflict-of-interest concerns. Special issues arise when committee members do not have expertise in the student's chosen area of research. Students benefit from clear policies and procedures, as well as guidance on changing advisors or committees without penalty.

## International Students

Cases involving international students are often more complex because finances, visas and accompanying time restrictions, and home-country expectations for academic success figure in the person's circumstance.

International students who come to the Ombuds Office are often referred by an administrator or faculty member. International students may need assistance in understanding the unique role of the Ombudsman on campus. In some cultures people seek advice about difficult or conflict situations early in the process while others wait until they see "no other option." Encouraging students to seek advice and support early before issues are too entrenched would be beneficial.

## Parental concerns

Increased numbers of parents call with concerns about business processes, grade appeal processes, disability-related issues, a climate of excessive student drinking, advising concerns, sanctioning decisions, timeliness in responding to issues, and frustration with the limitations around FERPA. Parents become more involved with cases when finances are impacted; unanticipated delays in graduation cause justifiable concern. Parents who provide financial support seek more direct information about those obligations.

## Campus-wide issues

### elearning

Protocols and expectations for on-line learning are evolving. Issues with technology, appropriate and collegial "on-line" behavior, academic integrity and instructor responsiveness for ever-increasing class sizes continue to arise.

One recommendation is that campus course appeal and refund policies be reviewed differently for on-line circumstances or that pre-course testing could occur to see whether Blackboard and other technologies will work smoothly.

### Disability accommodation

An increased number of cases with multiple concerns involve students and employees who have disabilities. These cases point out the need for regular training for faculty, staff and students on appropriate ADA accommodations and support for departments who are temporarily understaffed.

The federal ADA and ADAAA Regulations are interpreted broadly and strictly, resulting in the need for more accommodations for students and employees in the classroom and workplace. There is a need to educate supervisors and managers about our institutional responsibilities in providing appropriate accommodations in the workplace, as required by law and to provide a supportive and inclusive campus environment.

On a positive note, adding a position within the Office for Institutional Equity dedicated to working with employees with disabilities is offering guidance and support with ADA-related issues. Recommendations

include education and coaching for supervisors and faculty. While some disabilities are visible and have clear solutions, mental health and learning disabilities are harder to grasp for many faculty and supervisors. The campus community would benefit from education about the nature of “invisible” disabilities and what are considered creative solutions for helping students and employees to succeed. It would be helpful to have resources for coaching supervisors on how to adapt jobs or processes when working with an employee who has a disability, and for coaching faculty on best practices for adapting assignments or course material presentation for persons with varying disabilities. Additionally, a consistent statement for inclusion on course syllabi for students with disabilities would assist faculty and students.

## Conclusion

This report summarizes the work of the 2011-12 year, the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of the office's presence on campus. The Ombuds Office continues to function as an informal, confidential, neutral and independent resource for all members of the campus community.

The year marks the last year of being under the quarter system. Anytime change occurs, there are ripples of areas that are also impacted – workflow, reporting, curriculum content, scheduling, and expectations around time. I applaud the community for embracing the change that is about to occur. Next year poses additional opportunities for efficiency and renewed vision as we move toward the preparation and implementation of the RCM budgeting model. This affords another opportunity for examining the purpose and value of higher education and our interconnectedness as a campus community.

Thank you for your continued support of the role of the Ombudsman; the work done here is guided by principles of fairness and respect. We, as a campus community, have the ability to foster an equitable and fair academic and working climate. Thank you for the good work you do toward reaching that goal.

Respectfully,

Dianne Bouvier  
University Ombudsman