OHIO UNIVERSITY

**Office of the
University Ombudsman**

2010-2011 Annual Report

Office of the University Ombudsman
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Office of the Ombudsman Annual Report
September 1, 2010– August 31, 2011

Introduction

This year celebrates the 41st 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 student support staff. In 2008, the University Ombudsman was a full-time year-round administrator with no student support staff. 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 does not serve as an advocate for an individual, but 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 -*** 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

2010-2011 Activities of the Ombudsman

The academic year of 2010-2011 was an active one for the Ombudsman.

Internal

- Edited and distributed print materials to inform the community about services – brochure, bookmarks, grade appeal guide
- Fine-tuned data collection tools, using the Uniform Categories of Reporting for case issues (originally developed by the International Ombudsman Association)
- Attended the International Ombudsman Association conference, "Join the Conversation: Learn. Share. Grow." (April 2011)
- Attended California Caucus of Colleges and University Ombuds conference (Nov. 2010)
- Hired graduate student to assist with annual report data preparation

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 on the office's purpose at Regional Associate Dean meeting (April 2011)
- Participated quarterly in the new International Student Orientation (2010-2011)
- Presenter, "Females Who Teach Business: Exploring the Impact of Positive and Negative Affect in the Workplace," Patton College of Education, Ohio University (May 2011)
- 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
- Served as a member of the Provost's Women's Commission
- Served as a member of the Pregnancy Task Force
- Served as a member of the Diversity Initiative Review Committee
- Assisted 206+ visitors to the office with their concerns

External

- Presenter, "Females Who Teach Business: Exploring the Impact of Positive and Negative Affect in the Workplace," North American Management Society (NAMS), Midwest Business Administration Association (MBAA) International, Chicago (March 2011)
- Bouvier, D., McLaughlin, J., & Conley, V.M. (2011). Females Who Teach Business: Exploring the Impact of Positive and Negative Affect in the Workplace, Proceedings of the North American Management Society (NAMS), MBAA International (Peer review journal). Quantitative research project used Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) data.

2010-2011 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

Data were collected on 206 situations that the Ombudsman was presented with by visitors to the office during the academic year 2010-2011, as shown in Table 1 below. Fall and Winter quarters show the greatest number of cases. This annual report represents an academic year reporting cycle (fall, winter, spring, summer). It is worth noting that the office is closed for two weeks during intersession and for part of the summer. Brief and casual interactions that happen by phone, on the escalator, and on the street are also not included. Also, the more formal requests for service often called for talking with other people, so the total number of contacts to address situations far exceeds 206 people.

**Table 1: Number of Cases by Quarter 2011-2012**
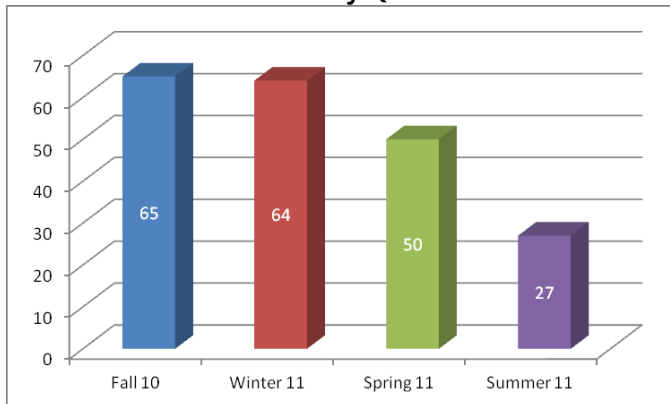
Visitors contact the office by various means. As shown in Table 2, most initial contacts were made by phone (58%) or email (23%); about 16% initially made an office visit, and 18% had an office visit as their second contact.

Table 2: Initial and Follow-up Means of Contact (percentages)
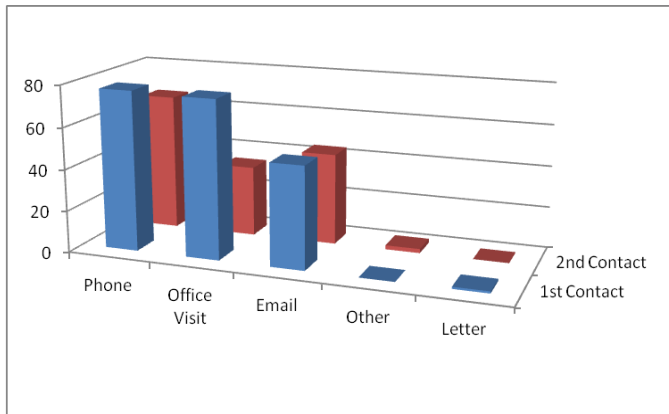
Many visitors come to the Ombuds Office to explain their concerns, be heard, seek advice and/or information, and gain a new perspective. While it is common perception that the Ombudsman frequently conducts mediations, often visitors elect to resolve issues on their own after consultation. In some cases, 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; Listening/Information (188 cases) is the most common intervention.

Table 3: Type of Intervention (numbers)
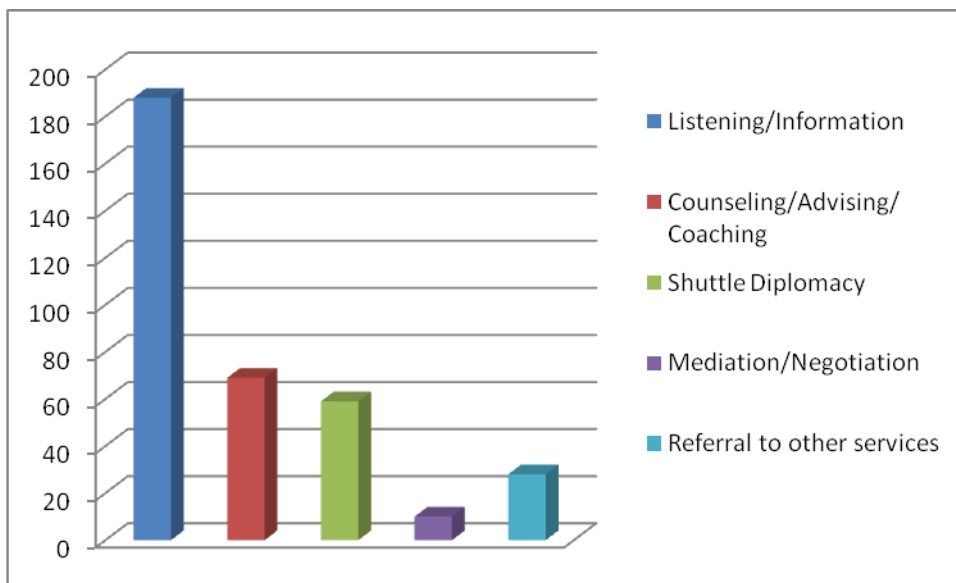
The Outcomes of Cases in Table 4 provides general outcomes for visitors. In some cases, there may have been more than one outcome. A new category was added this year, "Consultation provided," to reflect the visitor who seeks policy advice and answers about procedures; often these visitors feel comfortable 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 perceive that they 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.

Table 4: Outcomes of Cases (numbers)
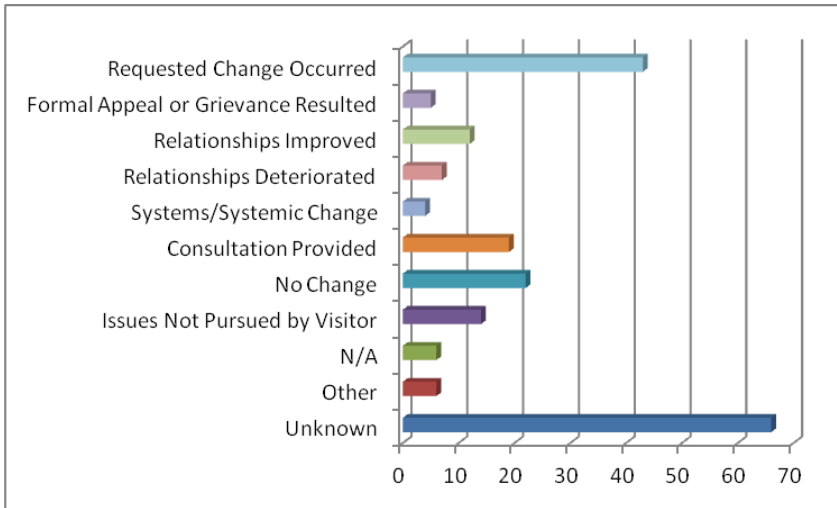
Many issues could not be resolved without the cooperation of individuals in other units; Table 5 reflects the inter-relatedness of our campus. The Ombudsman appreciates the support received throughout the year in responding to the issues brought forward.

Table 5: Involved in Conversations about Cases (numbers)
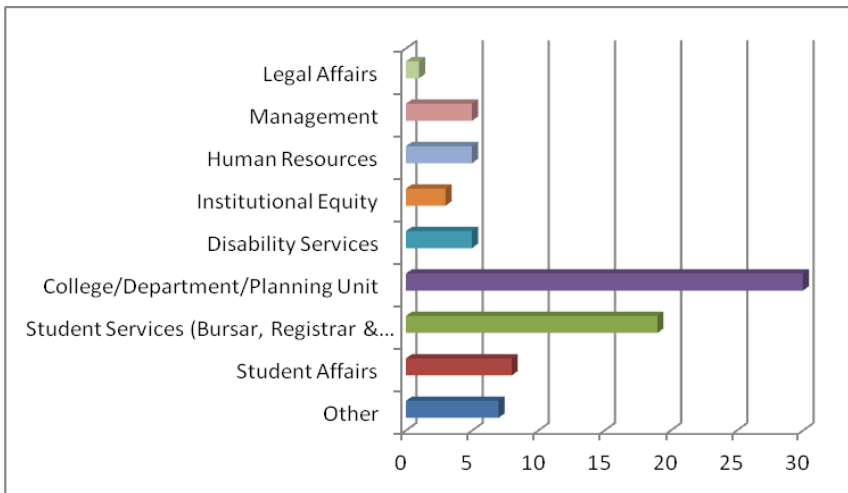
Nature of Issues and Concerns Brought to the Ombudsman

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, and 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 exceeds the 206 total "cases." The nature of these concerns is presented in the pages that follow.

While 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 identifies the following university-wide problems:

- System change to new PeopleSoft software disrupted registration and financial aid processes, causing difficulties for students and staff.
- Reorganization and promotion decisions made with what employees perceive as a non-transparent process, caused perceptions of unfairness, particularly for female employees.
- Employees in work environments with decreased staffing report increased health-related consequences.
- Faculty and department chairs are challenged by how to respond effectively to uncivil, non-collegial behavior within their department.
- Lack of clear, consistent university-wide family-leave policies continues to negatively impact faculty and graduate students.
- Explosion of eLearning student enrollments causes dissatisfaction in 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.

International Ombudsman Association

IOA Uniform Reporting Categories for Issues/Concerns

Categories	# Concerns
1 <u>**Compensation & Benefits**</u> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.	
Sub-total	6
1.a **Compensation** (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)	2
1.b **Payroll** (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)	1
1.c **Benefits** (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)	2
1.d **Retirement, Pension** (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)	0
1.e **Other** (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	1
2 <u>**Relationships**</u> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student, colleague-colleague, student-student.)	
Sub-total	171
2.a **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important - or most important –often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)	10
2.b **Respect, Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate behavior, disregard for people, rudeness, crudeness, etc.	40
2.c **Trust, Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)	2
2.d **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)	0
2.e **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)	9
2.f **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)	9
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)	4
2.h **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)	0
2.i **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)	0
2.j **Assignments, Schedules** (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)	2
2.k **Feedback** (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)	0
2.l **Consultation** (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual relationship situations)	25
2.m **Performance Appraisal/Grading** (job performance in formal or informal evaluation)	7
2.n Grading (academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)	27

2.o	**Departmental Climate** (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility)	14
2.p	**Supervisory Effectiveness** (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)	13
2.q	**Insubordination** (refusal to do what is asked)	0
2.r	**Discipline** (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)	8
2.s	**Equity of Treatment** (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)	1
2.t	**Other** (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	0

3	**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.)	
	Sub-total	**12**

3.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)	1
3.b	*Job Classification and Description* (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)	2
3.c	*Involuntary Transfer, Change of Assignment* (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)	2
3.d	*Tenure-Position Security, Ambiguity* (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories), Career Progression (Promotion, Reappointment, or Tenure)	0
3.e	**Career Progression** (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)	2
3.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)	1
3.g	*Resignation* (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)	0
3.h	*Termination/Non-Renewal* (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)	3
3.i	*Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff* (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)	0
3.j	**Position Elimination** (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)	0
3.k	**Career Development/Coaching/Mentoring** (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)	1
3.l	*Other* (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	0

4	**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.	
	Sub-total	**19**

4.a	**Criminal Activity** (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)	1

4.b	**Business and Financial Practices** (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)	1
4.c	**Harassment** (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video, psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)	3
4.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.])	1
4.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)	12
4.f	**Accessibility** (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)	0
4.g	**Intellectual Property Rights** (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)	0
4.h	**Privacy and Security of Information** (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)	1
4.i	**Property Damage** (personal property damage, liabilities)	0
4.j	**Other** (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	0

5	**Safety, Health, and Physical Environment** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.		
		Sub-total	**1**

5.a	**Safety** (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for safety training and equipment)	0
5.b	**Physical Working/Living Conditions** (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)	0
5.c	**Ergonomics** (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)	0
5.d	**Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)	0
5.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)	0
5.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)	0
5.g	**Safety Equipment** (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)	0
5.h	**Environmental Policies** (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)	0
5.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)	1
5.j	**Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	0

6	**Services/Administrative Issues** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.		
		Sub-total	**98**

6.a	**Quality of Services** (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)	4

6.b	**Responsiveness, Timeliness** (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)	6
6.c	**Administrative Decisions and Interpretation, Application of Rules** (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.)	70
6.d	**Behavior of Service Provider(s)** (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, eg., rude, inattentive, or impatient)	2
6.e	Course availability; completing degree in timely fashion	12
6.f	**Other** (any services or administrative issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	4

7	**Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization. **Sub-total**	**11**

7.a	**Strategic and Mission-Related, Strategic and Technical Management** (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)	0
7.b	**Leadership and Management** (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)	0
7.c	**Use of Positional Power, Authority** (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)	1
7.d	**Communication** (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)	0
7.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, eg. downsizing, offshoring, outsourcing)	0
7.f	**Organizational Climate** (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)	3
7.g	**Change Management** (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)	3
7.h	**Priority Setting and/or Funding** (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)	3
7.i	**Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results** (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)	0
7.j	**Interdepartment, Interorganization Work, Territory** (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)	0
7.k	**Other** (any organizational issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	1

8	**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. **Sub-total**	**12**

|		
8.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)	7

8.b **Values and Culture** (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)

2

8.c **Scientific Conduct, Integrity** (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)

1

8.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, eg., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)

2

8.e **Other** (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above categories) Please specify below:

0

TOTAL		**330**

Visitors to the Office in 2010-2011

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 2009-2010 Annual Report to this reporting cycle will be noted.

Table 6: Visitor's Affiliation (percent of total)
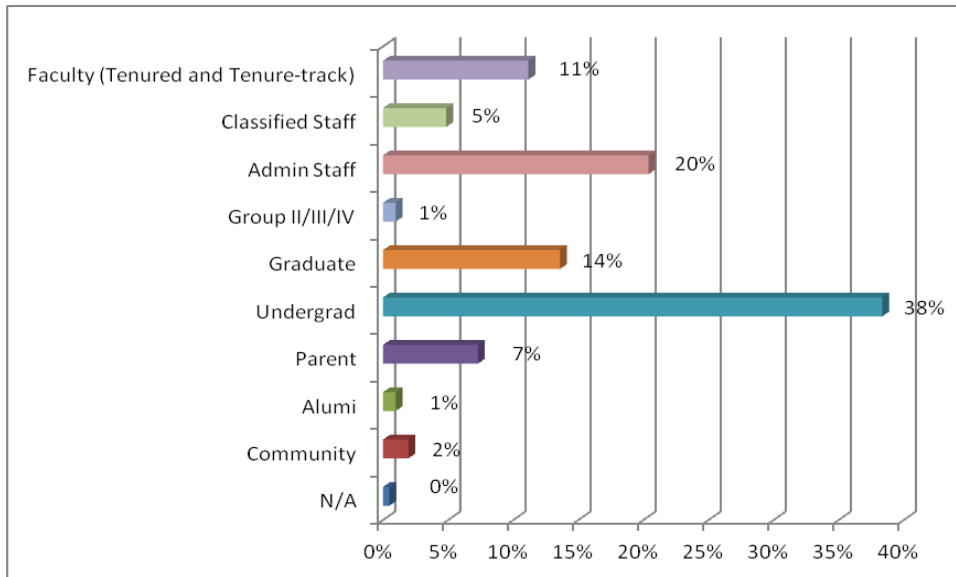
Visitors with the following affiliations increased from previous year: administrative and classified staff, parent, graduate and undergraduate students. Administrative staff had the greatest increase, from 15% to 20% of the visitors in 2010-2011.
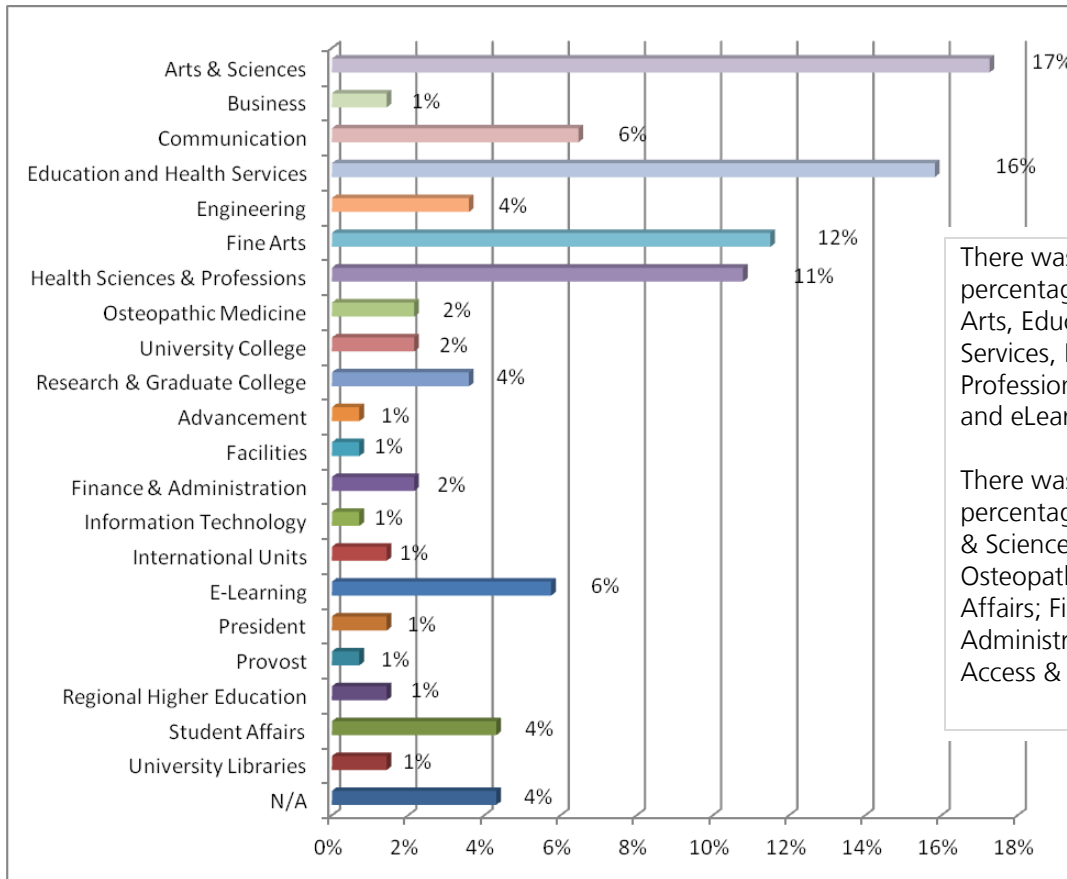
Visitors with the following affiliations decreased in percentage from last year: Faculty (Tenured and Tenure Track).

Table 7: Visitor's Campus (percent of total)
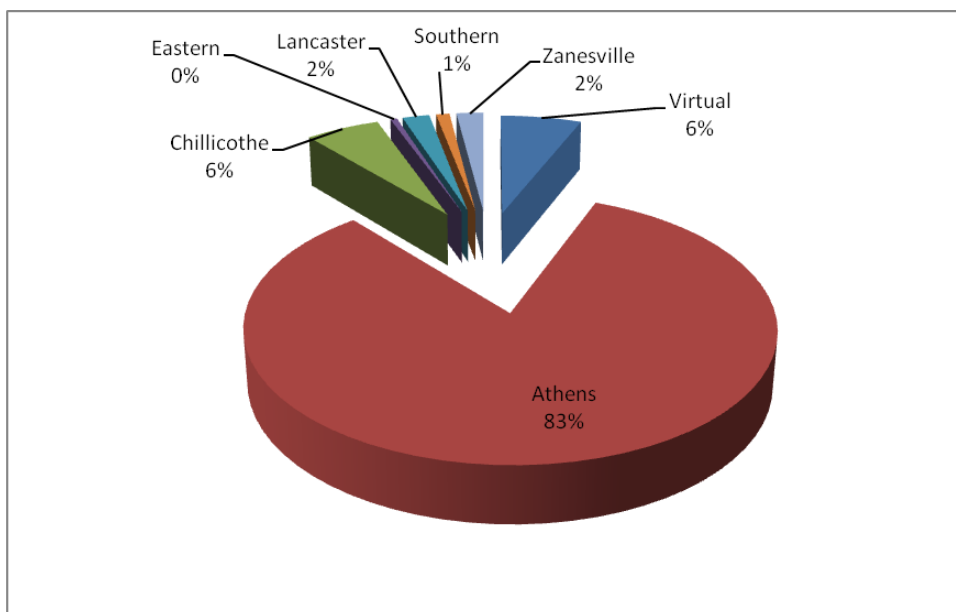
The Ombuds Office continues to have visitors from all campuses, with an increasing number coming from those involved with distance and on-line learning.

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

Unit	Percent
Arts & Sciences	17%
Business	1%
Communication	6%
Education and Health Services	16%
Engineering	4%
Fine Arts	12%
Health Sciences & Professions	11%
Osteopathic Medicine	2%
University College	2%
Research & Graduate College	4%
Advancement	1%
Facilities	1%
Finance & Administration	2%
Information Technology	1%
International Units	1%
E-Learning	6%
President	1%
Provost	1%
Regional Higher Education	1%
Student Affairs	4%
University Libraries	1%
N/A	4%

There was an increase in the percentage of visitors from Fine Arts, Education and Human Services, Health Sciences and Professions, Graduate College and eLearning.

There was a decrease in the percentage of visitors from Arts & Sciences; Business; Osteopathic Medicine; Student Affairs; Finance & Administration; and Diversity, Access & Equity.
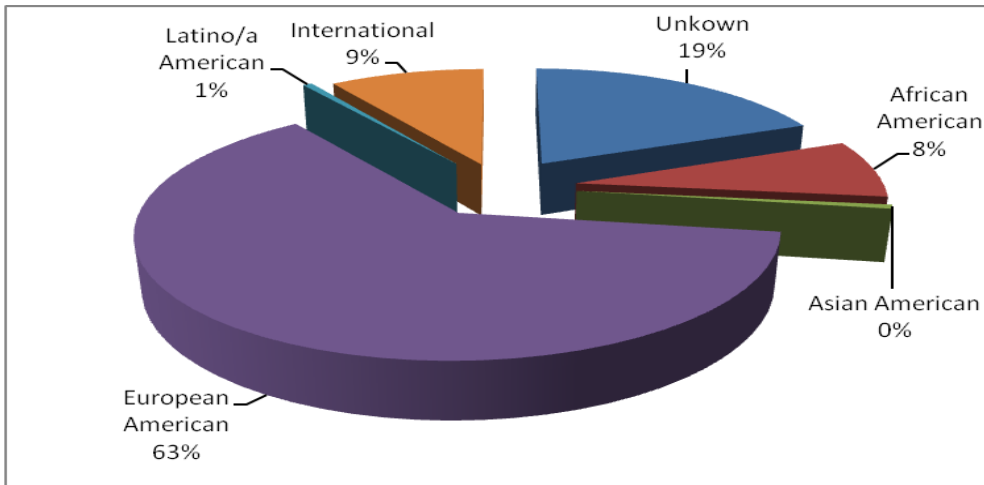
Table 9: Visitor's Gender (percent of total)

Male 40%

Female 60%
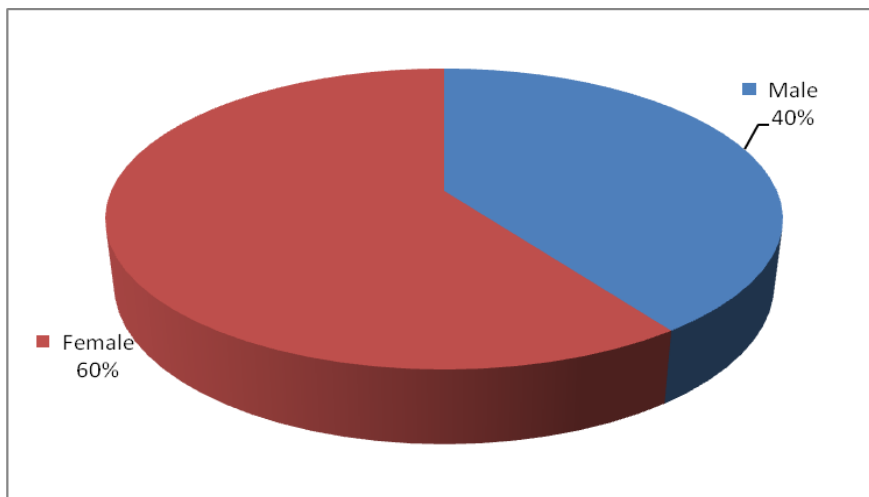
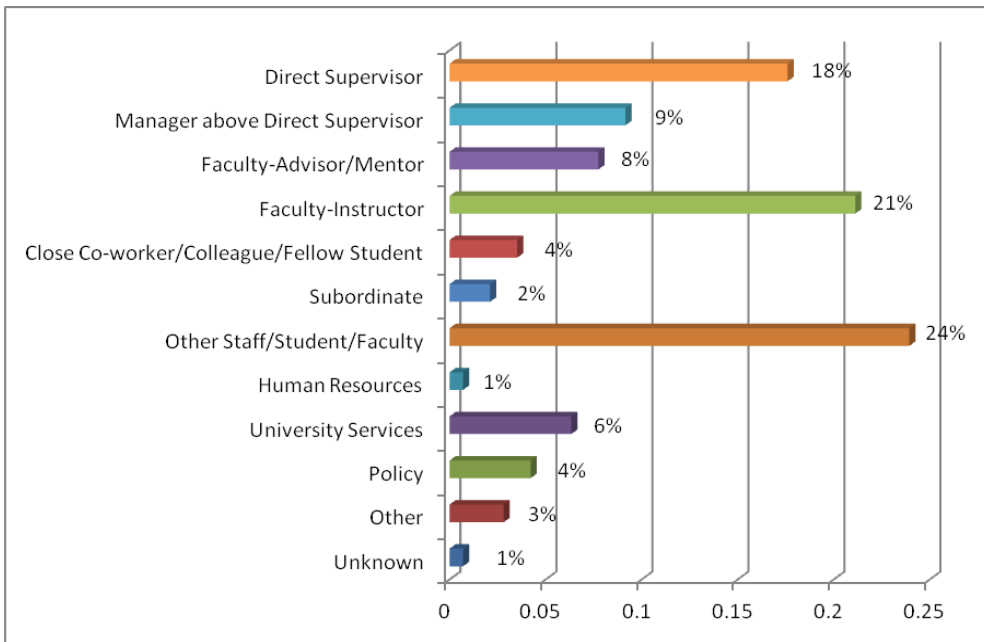The gender breakdown remains relatively consistent with previous years.

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

Race and ethnicity percentages did not vary significantly from last year. In some cases, race was not captured because many contacts are by phone.

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

There was a decrease in cases involving a person's direct supervisor and those involving a faculty member.

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, campus, unit within the University structure, gender, and race/ethnicity.
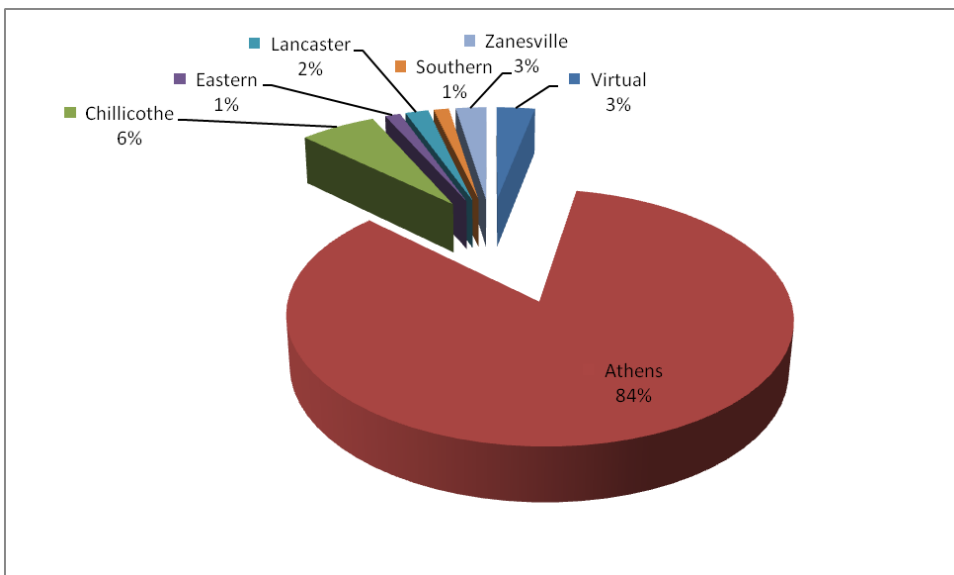
Table 12: Person of Concern's Affiliation (percent of total)
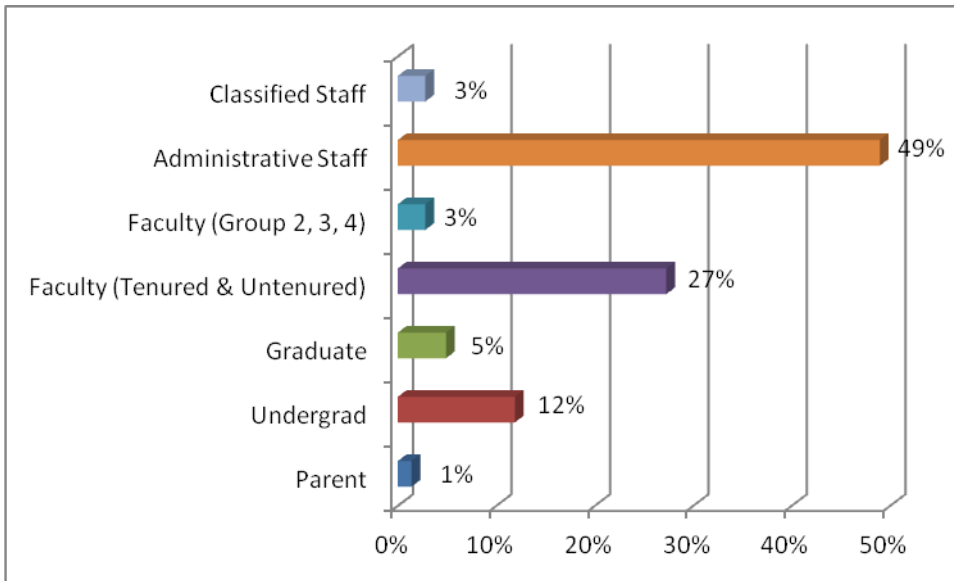
Most cases involved administrative staff, with an increase from 50 cases in 2009-2010 to 70 cases in 2010-2011.
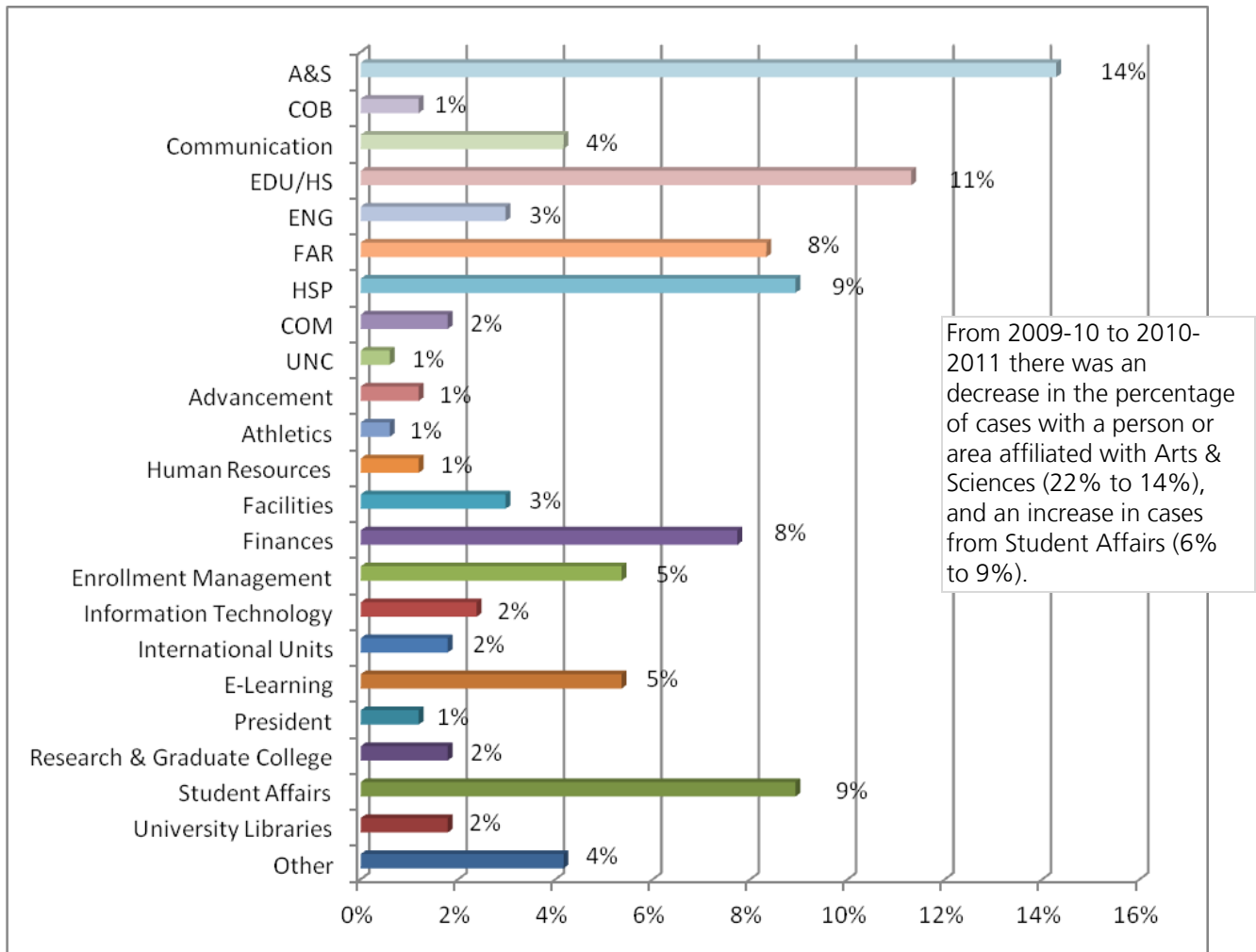
Many cases were oriented toward changes in processes. Cases involving faculty decreased from 75 to 39 cases.

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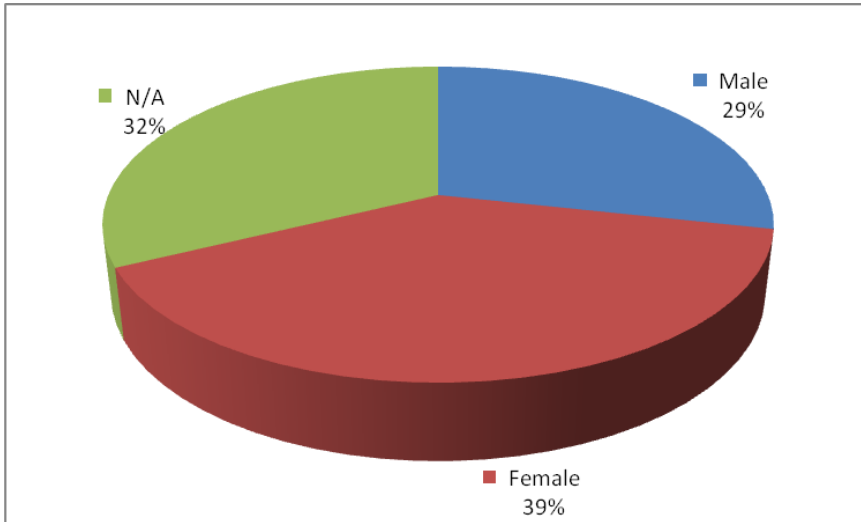

This past year, a higher percentage of cases concerned people/areas on the regional campuses, compared to the previous year.

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

Unit	Percent
A&S	14%
COB	1%
Communication	4%
EDU/HS	11%
ENG	3%
FAR	8%
HSP	9%
COM	2%
UNC	1%
Advancement	1%
Athletics	1%
Human Resources	1%
Facilities	3%
Finances	8%
Enrollment Management	5%
Information Technology	2%
International Units	2%
E-Learning	5%
President	1%
Research & Graduate College	2%
Student Affairs	9%
University Libraries	2%
Other	4%

From 2009-10 to 2010-2011 there was an decrease in the percentage of cases with a person or area affiliated with Arts & Sciences (22% to 14%), and an increase in cases from Student Affairs (6% to 9%).

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

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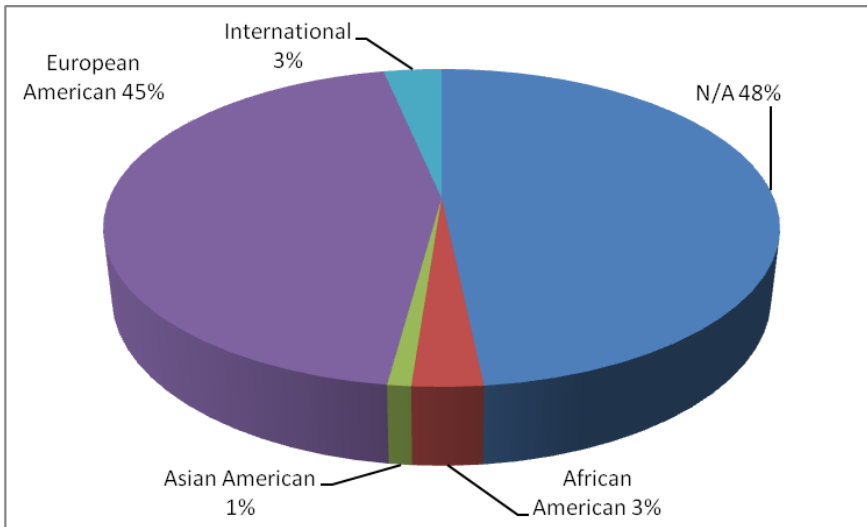
Analysis and Recommendations

A comparison of the data from this year with the 2009-10 data and annual report highlight some changes and some continuing issues.

Cases decreased from 236 in 2009-2010 to 206 in 2010-2011.

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 throughout the year; when the office is closed for a month, delays occur in responding to them.

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

This year was an ambitious year for implementing multiple system changes: transition to the new student information system, Peoplesoft; the on-going work of moving from quarters to semesters; and changes in federal financial aid guidelines. During times of change, there is a need for intentional kindness by all parties.

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

Employees

Faculty

Of note is that cases about faculty were nearly half of those from the previous year.

For some departments, ethical concerns arose regarding tenure and promotion processes and search committees, including power dynamics and perceptions of discrimination. One recommendation is that in-person training or facilitated discussions occur at the committee level about the best practices and expectations in tenure and promotion deliberations and hiring, including protocol for responding to inappropriate comments made during these processes.

Administrative Decisions

Like the previous two years, there was an increase in the proportion of cases (by 40% this past year) that were about administrators or their decisions. Questions arose about fairness of decisions and the application of rules, including the fairness of fees, difficulties with website registration and technology, and financial holds. In addition, visitors spoke about concerns with supervisors, limited communication during times of reorganization, and treatment received during this process. It is important to note that when questions were brought to light, in large part efforts were consistently made to re-assess and address situations fairly and within policy.

Students

Undergraduates
As with any system conversion, issues unexpectedly arise. The transition to Peoplesoft resulted in some students having registration and financial aid issues, and employees needing to work overtime hours. Concerns were handled on a case-by-case basis.

Graduate Students
Graduate students have a complex array of issues, ranging from intellectual merit of dissertation research and difficulties in finding advisors interested in their dissertation topic, to conflict-of-interest concerns and struggles with managing departmental politics.

International Students
An increased percentage of visitors are international (from 2 to 9%), with 75% of them being students. Cases involving international students are often more complex, because finances, visas, and home-country expectations for academic success weigh into the person's circumstance.

The timing for TOEFL testing at the end of Winter quarter caused difficulties for those students who did not pass with an acceptable score. Without meeting the TOEFL requirement, Spring quarter courses were automatically cancelled, delaying entrance into academic programs and sometimes impacting funding and intended time to graduation. Scores were calculated during the week of Spring Break, not allowing time for appeal or further review. Some international students need additional understanding of processes. This issue should be alleviated with the change to the semester system.

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.

Parental concerns
Parents continue to call with concerns about business processes, grading appeal processes, advising concerns, judicial 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.

Campus-wide issues

Distance and on-line learning
Visitors continued to call about services related to on-line admissions, registration, and course issues. Offices and programs seem not always to be sufficiently staffed to respond to the increased numbers of on-line students. Electronic platforms do not work for some distance students. First-time on-line students often do not know whether their particular technology circumstance is compatible with the Ohio University framework until after the course begins. One recommendation is that campus course appeal and refund policies be reviewed for on-line courses.

It is worth noting that the previous year's concern with distance students being charged Wellbeing and Student Legal fees has been addressed.

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, support to departments who are temporarily understaffed, and the health impact of stressful circumstances.

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.

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. Resources for coaching supervisors on how to adapt jobs or processes when working with an employee who has a disability, and coaching faculty on best practices for adapting assignments or course material presentation for persons with varying disabilities, would be helpful. Additionally, faculty and students would benefit from having a consistent disability accommodation statement on course syllabi.

Conclusion

While initially created during a time of crisis and unrest 41 years ago, the Ombuds Office continues to function as an informal, confidential, neutral and independent resource for all members of the campus community. As new procedures and systems are updated and revised, interpersonal and process concerns are expected to arise. The front-line campus community deserves particular applause for continuing to be responsive to the needs and concerns of the student body.

Next year poses additional opportunities for efficiency and renewed vision as we move toward the preparation and implementation of the quarter to semester system, as well as the eventual RCM budgeting model. Centering efforts on educating students, as well as providing a climate for professional growth and development for our employees, will strategically position the University to succeed.

In my role as Ombudsman, I often call administrators and faculty to assist in resolving cases. In most instances, I am met with respect and genuine interest in finding fair solutions for all parties involved. We, as a campus community, have the ability to foster an equitable and fair academic and working climate. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the University in this capacity.

Respectfully,

Dianne Bouvier
University Ombudsman