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**University Ombuds Annual Report  
June 1, 2004 – May 31, 2005 Report  
(Condensed Version)**

**Elizabeth Graham, Ph.D., University Ombuds  
Katherine Ziff, Ph.D., Assistant Ombuds**

## **I. Introduction**

The University Ombuds Office, in its 35<sup>th</sup> year of operation, serves to provide the university community with confidential and informal assistance in resolving campus conflicts, disputes, and grievances and to promote fair and equitable treatment within the university. The Office of the Ombuds is staffed by Elizabeth Graham, University Ombuds and Katherine Ziff, Assistant Ombuds. This report details the activities of the Ohio University Ombuds office for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. In addition, this report describes the people and the concerns they brought to our office, noticeable trends, recommendations for consideration, and plans.

## **II. Educational Outreach Activities**

### **Affirming Diversity Initiative**

This year Katherine Ziff (Assistant Ombuds) organized a series of public conversations with Ohio University faculty and staff highlighting diversity at Ohio University. The series of four panels, sponsored by the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, the Office for University Diversity, the Office of the Office for Institutional Equity, and the MLK Committee, highlighted existing diversity within the Ohio University.

The purpose of the panels was to provide an opportunity for people to gather and hear first-hand what the experiences of different diverse groups on campus bring to Ohio University and to our community. The panels featured personal narratives as well as suggestions for making Ohio University a more inclusive and diverse place. All panels were open to the university community.

The series, held in Baker Center's 1804 Room, was constituted as follows:

February 14, 2005	<i>Profiles in Courage: The African American Experience at Ohio University</i>
March 9, 2005	<i>Women in Leadership at Ohio University</i>
April 20, 2005	<i>Out in Academia: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Experience at Ohio University</i>
May 4, 2005	<i>International Voices at Ohio University</i>

Total attendance, which included a real-time electronic component, was estimated at 450-500 persons. The following Ohio University faculty and staff participated as members or conveners for the panels:

Matthew Adeyanju  
Don E. Adleta  
William L. Allen  
Stacey Brinkley  
Lindsey Sebastian Bryson  
Susan R. Burgess  
Laurie J. Burkland  
Patricia Cue  
James B.L. Calvin  
Margaret F. Cohn  
Glenn A. Doston  
David N. Descutner  
Nicolette Dioguardi  
Mickey J. Hart  
Ronald J. Hunt  
Kathy A. Krendl

Manjulika Koshal  
Nana Kwaku Owusu-Kwarteng  
Brian D. McCoy  
Deborah McDavis  
Najee Emerson Muhammad  
Lena Wright Myers  
Ann Paulins  
Patti L. Pennell  
Connie R. Perdreau  
Eva Pinter  
Nagesh Rao  
Ann Rathbun  
Josep Rota  
G. Christine Taylor  
Jean R. Witkowski

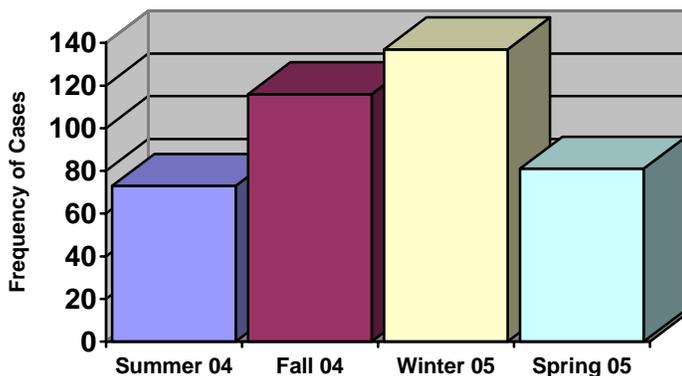
A variety of themes were expressed by panelists. Misunderstandings, fears, racism, obstacles and challenges were described along with gratitude for support from others and strategies for dismantling discrimination in the workplace. Members of the audience were invited to provide feedback, which included expressions of welcome and appreciation for the opportunity to share and learn. Others were critical of the limited number of panels or found it uncomfortable to listen to the difficult experiences of others.

### III. Profile of Office Visitors

#### Number of Cases

The University Ombuds Office processed 407 cases during the fiscal year 2004-2005. This figure does not reflect the more than 50 telephone calls or casual conversations on the street that required quick and easy answers. A comparison of the number of visitors from 03-04 to 04-05 represents an increase of approximately 35 cases.

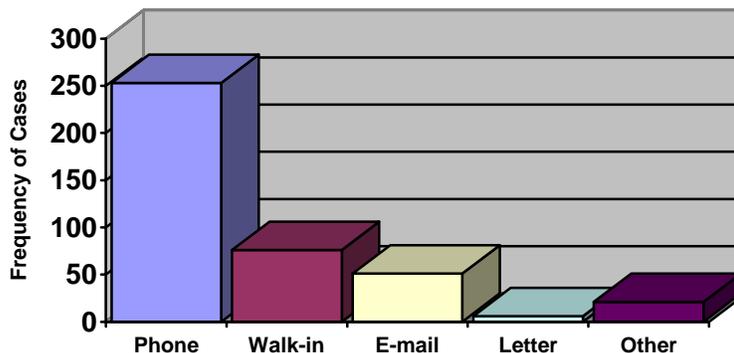
**Total Number of Cases (Fig. 1)**



#### Initial Means of Contact

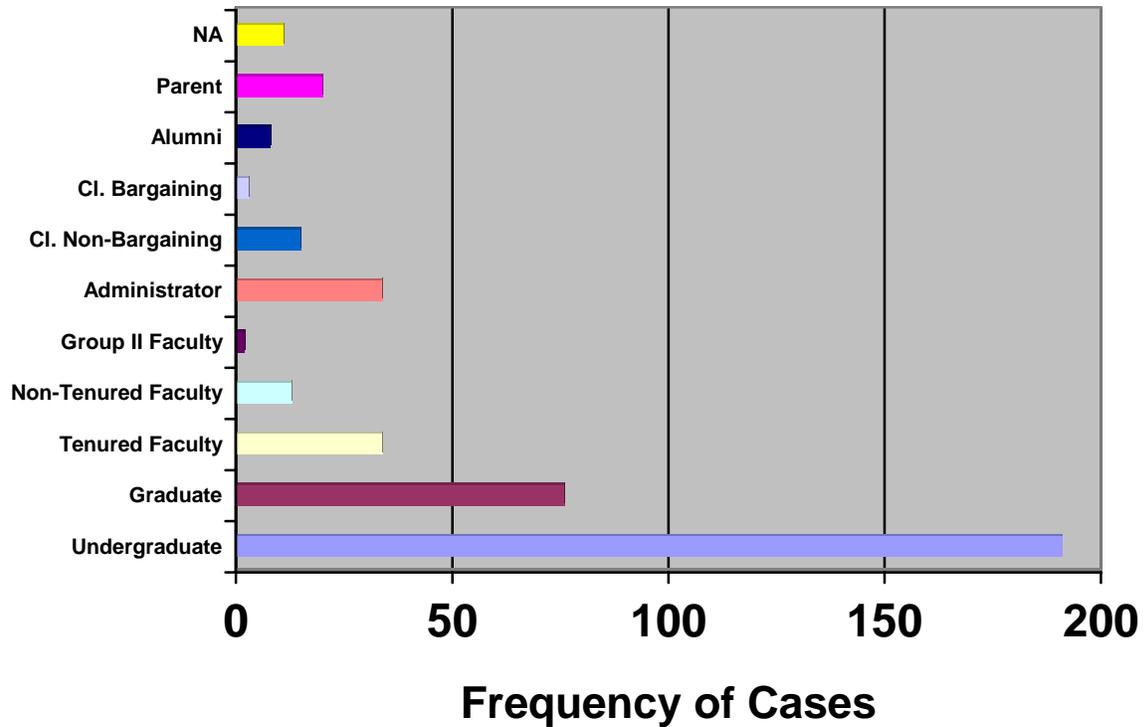
The Ombuds Office is contacted most often by telephone, followed by walk-ins, e-mail, letter and other means, indicating to some degree an inviting atmosphere at 200 Crewson House.

**Initial Means of Contact (Fig. 2)**



The most frequent group of visitors were undergraduate students, followed by graduate students, faculty (tenured and untenured), and administrative, classified, and other staff as indicated in Figure 3

### Status of Visitor (Fig. 3)



### Distribution of Office Visitors by OU Population Group

Although Figure 3 indicates that the majority of our visitors are students, Figure 4 is a more accurate reflection of the distribution of visitors as the status of visitors is examined in light of their total population. These figures can indicate where preventive measures and outreach may be focused in the future.

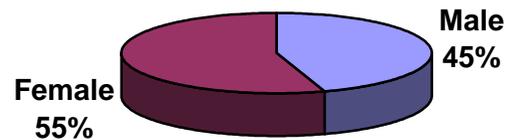
Position	Faculty	Administrative	Classified	Undergrad Students	Graduate Students
<b>Population Number</b>	1878	1541	1401	23,982	3484
<b>% of Population</b>	2.60%	2.20%	1.28%	.80%	2.18%

\*These figures reflect all members of the OU academic community (Athens and regional campus, Osteopathic Medicine, continuing education and off-campus programs).

## Sex of Visitor

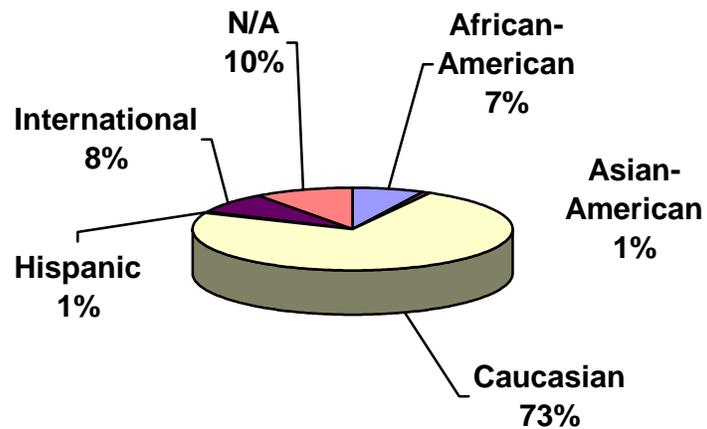
These figures are reflective of the university profile as women comprise 56% of the university population and men represent 44%.

**Sex of Visitor (Fig. 4)**



## Ethnicity of Visitor

**Ethnicity of Visitor (Fig. 5)**

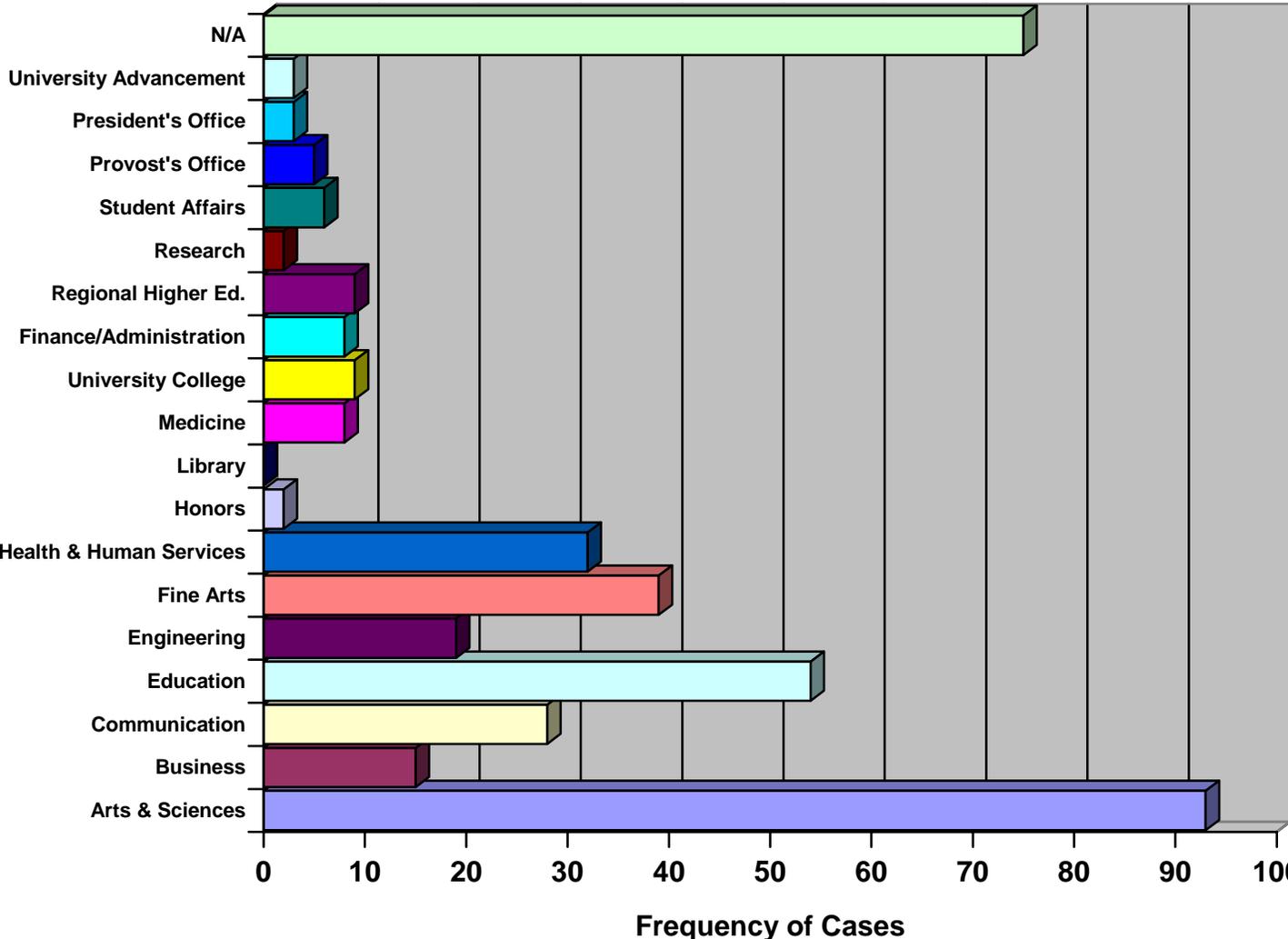


\*N/A = Not applicable/Not Available

# Visitor's Unit

Units making significant contact with the Ombuds Office include Arts & Sciences, Education, and Fine Arts, as shown in Figure 6. Please note that the size of the unit is often reflected in the number of visitors the Ombuds Office receives.

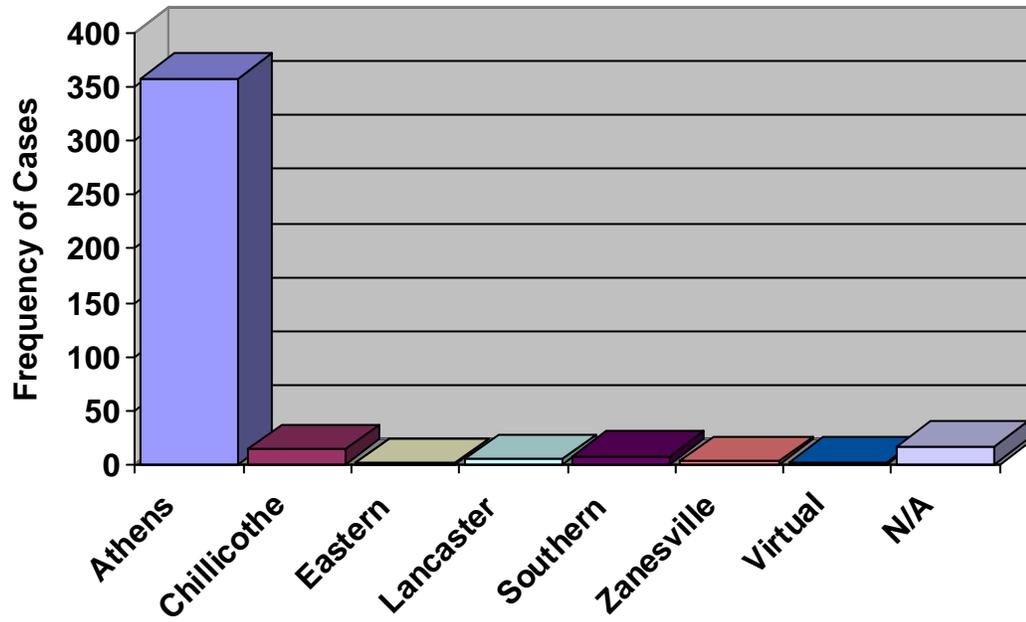
Visitor's Unit (Fig. 6)



## Campus Location

As Figure 7 illustrates, most visits involved Athens campus constituents.

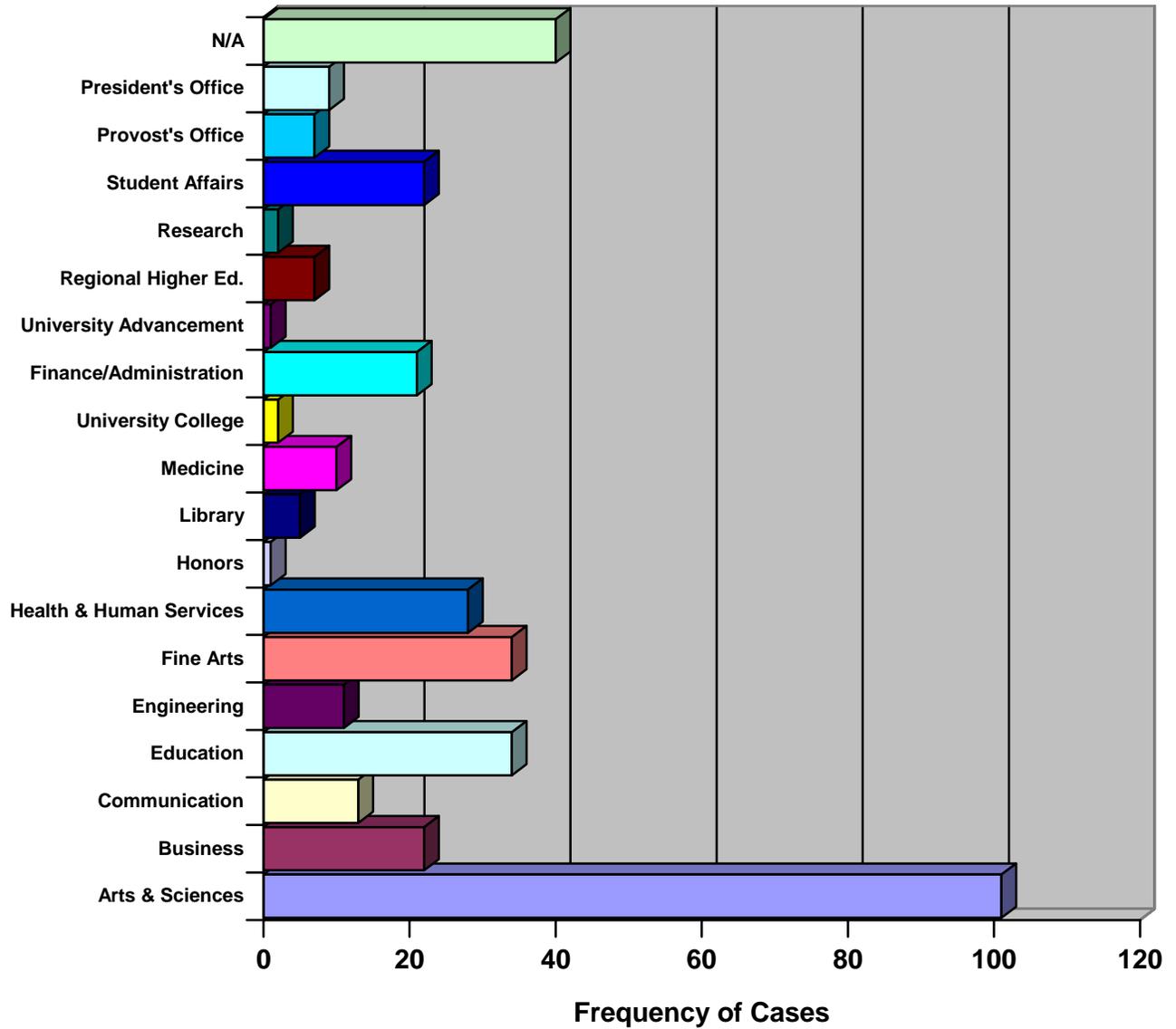
**Campus Location (Fig. 7)**



## Area/Person of Concern's Unit

This figure indicates where reported problem-areas originated before resolution.

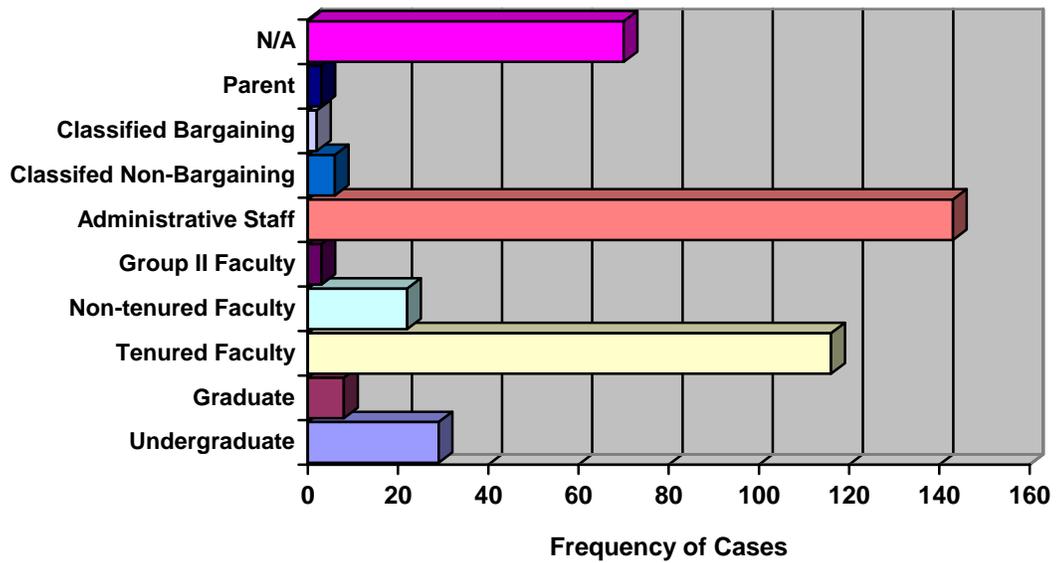
**Area/Person of Concern's Unit (Fig. 8)**



## Area/Person of Concern's Status

Figure 9 shows status, rank, and/or classification of persons cited by complainant. The two prominent categories – administrative staff and tenured faculty – are influenced by supervisor/employee issues and perhaps would be higher in number.

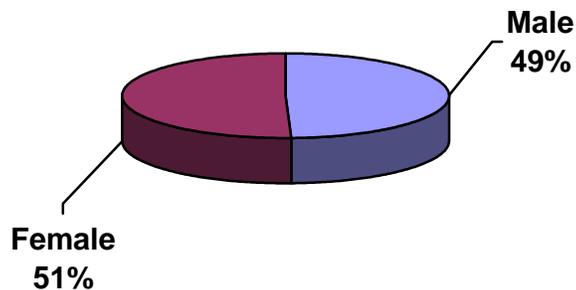
**Area/Person of Concern's Status (Fig. 9)**



## Area/Person of Concern's Sex

Figure 10 shows sex of persons cited by complainants.

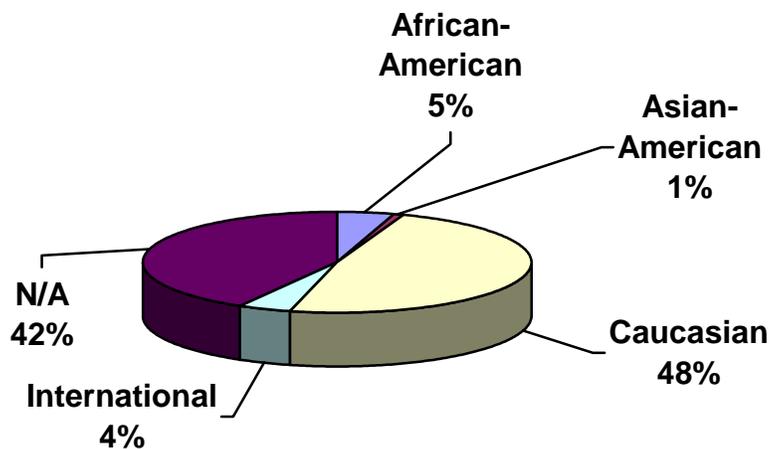
**Area/Person of Concern's Sex  
(Fig. 10)**



## Area/Person of Concern's Ethnicity

Figure 11 illustrates ethnicity of persons cited by complainant.

**Area/Person of Concern's Ethnicity (Fig. 11)**

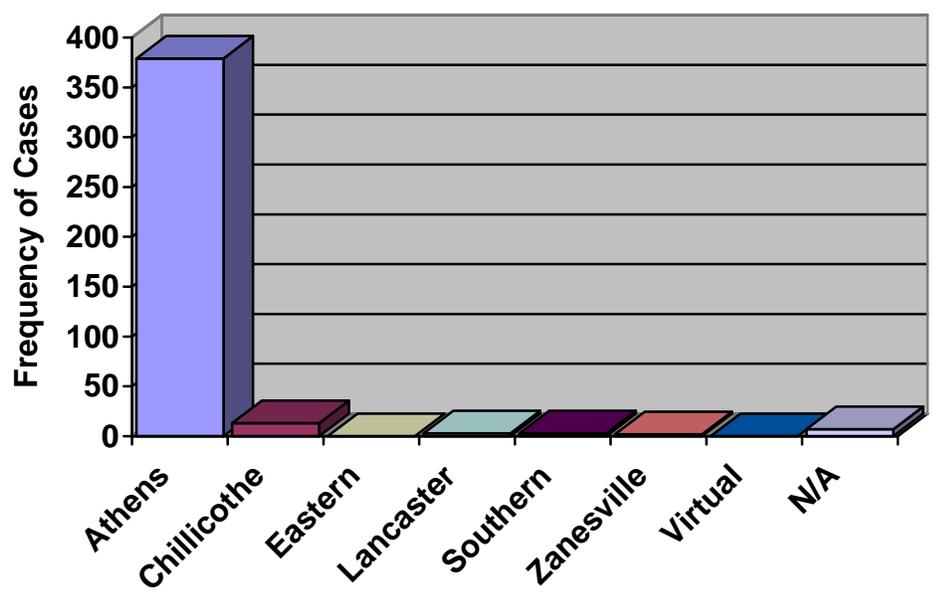


\*N/A = Not applicable/Not Available

### Area/Person of Concern's Campus Location

Figure 12 shows campus location of persons cited by complainant.

**Area/Person of Concern's Campus Location (Fig. 12)**

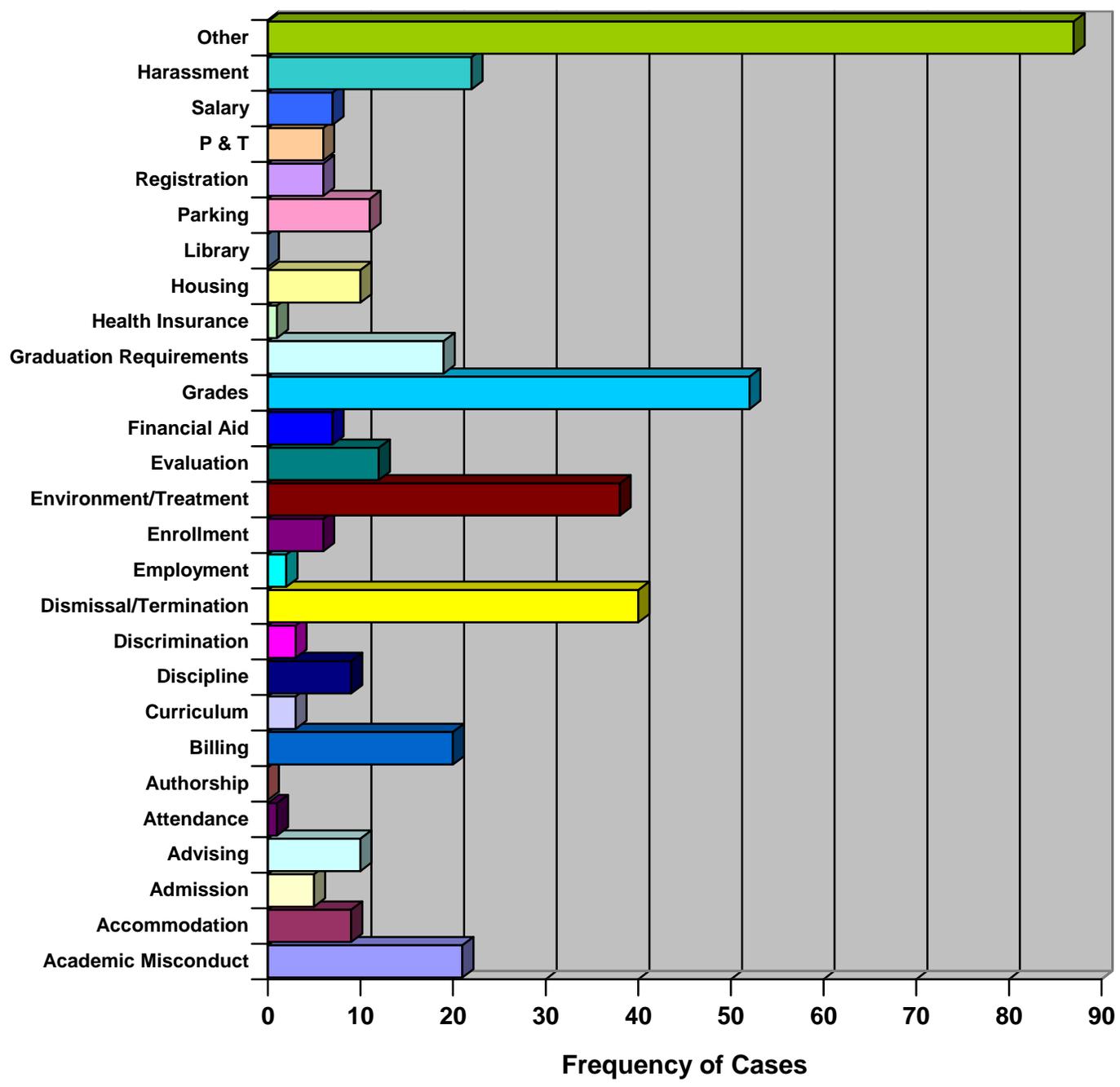


### Nature of Concern

Figure 13 illustrates the nature of the issue brought to the Ombuds Office with *other* (detailed below), *grading*, *dismissals/termination*, and *environment/treatment* concerns by far the largest categories.

It is important to note, however, that the number of cases identified as *problems with environment and treatment* (see Figure 13) is reflective of the applicability of these concerns to all members of the university community. It is evident that incivility on campus is prevalent and experienced by all constituents in the community.

Nature of Concern (Fig. 13)



\*See Appendix A for detailed definition of categories

The “**Other**” category seemed to be an especially rich category this year. Here are some prevalent themes.

**Complaints about poor teaching**

**Complaints about poor/unmotivated students**

**Religion**, including visitors who were searching for roommates of a particular religion as well as concerns about freedom “from” religion on campus.

**Job stress**, including worries about job security and new job requirements as well as questions about complaint procedures for administrators.

**Legal services**, including access to Student Legal Services.

**LGBT issues**, including calls from the Athens area community about resources.

**Mental health concerns**, including faculty concerns about student mental health, faculty concerns about the mental health of colleagues, student concerns about mental health of other students, and parent concern about child’s mental illness.

**Drugs and alcohol**, such as parent concerns about alcohol consumption in residence halls and student concerns about student alcohol consumption and OU alcohol policies.

**Abuse/assault/threats**, including sexual assault, spouse abuse, and fights following the presidential election in November.

**Miscellaneous payment matters**, such as release from meal plans, refunds, tutoring compensation, in-state residency, and concerns about class fees.

**Miscellaneous class questions**, such as change of exam time, “pink slipping” questions, lost tests, class section enrollment confusion, make-up tests, and excuses from Hudson Health Center.

**Other academic matters**, including readmission, “expunging” of grades, and how to get a new dissertation chair.

**Other campus processes**, such as issues regarding campus building bulletin boards and how to get an ID card for a visiting professor.

## IV. Concerns and Recommendations

1. University leadership could encourage employee wellness in the face of stress through employee incentives, modeling by example, and fee reductions at university wellness facilities.
2. As the university continues to streamline budgets through non-renewals of contract, outplacement services for displaced employees would be both beneficial and humane. In addition, a set of procedures for how best to enact employee transitions are necessary. In the absence of such procedures, anxiety and uncertainty among employees will undoubtedly increase.
3. The University would be well-served if OU leaders modeled the open dialogue that the Provosts' office has encouraged (i.e., Vision Ohio). There is the perception on campus that many voices are being silenced. Those who hold this perception believe that free and open dialogue is not encouraged, appreciated, or sought out. They maintain that decisions are reached with very little input from all stakeholders. While this may be true in certain circles, perhaps the real problem concerns organizational communication—how we go about communicating decisions. It will do no good to debate whether the perception is valid. Something is amiss, and because of it, resentment will only continue to build unless this perception is proven wrong.
4. Privacy of student records needs to be maintained. Although the university has made great strides in protecting students' personal information, class work with grades and identifiers contained therein are routinely left outside faculty offices for students to retrieve without regard for privacy laws. These practices lead to security failures, identity theft, and renders student information vulnerable to exposure.
5. The Ombuds Office continues to see visitors each year for which mental-health matters are a concern. Inevitably, we have visitors (usually students) each quarter who are contemplating harm to self or others, and we receive inquiries from faculty and staff about how to respond to those in distress. Our sense is that these types of cases are increasing, and national trends would support this as well. The university should work to inform all members of the university community about resources and processes for advising and assisting those in distress. Currently, the university community generally receives no training on how to handle an employee or student who is experiencing a mental-health crisis.
6. Professionals, practitioners, and some new hires brought in to teach with little or no instructional training is problematic. We owe our instructors more than the assumption that *they will figure it out as they go*. Instructional training and development are necessary for those new to teaching. Mentoring programs are useful in socializing new members into the profession. Moreover, utilizing our Center for Teaching Excellence also might prove helpful.

7. We should be more responsive and accommodating to university members who may wish to observe a religious holiday in lieu of work or classroom obligations.
8. The university needs to further operationalize the policy and procedures for amorous relationships involving students and faculty. Although the Faculty Handbook addresses this situation, the current directives are inadequate. We need to clarify the implications of these relationships for faculty and students to prevent potential vulnerability of either or both parties.
9. When we speak of campus initiatives and long-term planning, we need to make a concerted effort to include classified staff in the decisions-making process. Whether we are speaking about instruction concerning FERPA guidelines, or training in new harassment procedures, it is imperative that the classified staffs, who serve as the *front door* to the university, not be neglected.
10. We in the Ombuds Office are struggling with the need to ensure visitors confidentiality but at the same time inform them that we are also obligated to act on information that they might share. This dilemma is currently being discussed by Ombuds professionals across the country.

Certainly, these concerns are not unique to Ohio University. In addition, for every problematic situation, we can recount dozens of helpful ones. Many students, faculty, and staff are gifted—exceptionally so. Some academic environments are model, some university documents are open and inviting, and some administrators are nurturing and good advocates for faculty, staff, and students. Our intent is to resolve issues so that more incidents can be cited in creating an inclusive, welcoming environment at Ohio University.

### **Appendix A: Descriptions of Case Categories**

**Academic Misconduct:** Issues related to cheating and misappropriation of referenced material.

**Accommodation:** These include ADA cases and special consideration for an individual's circumstances.

**Admissions:** Admissions issues often related to initial enrollment or transfer processes and procedures.

**Advising:** Problems associated with academic advising and/or advisor issues.

**Attendance:** These situations involve class attendance policies.

**Authorship:** These involve questions such as who should be listed as first author, authorship protocol, and perceived "unfairness" in regard to their research, thesis data, publications, and conference presentations.

**Billing:** Anything to do with addressing billing charges, refunds, or general money concerns fall into this category.

**Curriculum:** In general, these cases concern departmental requirements, changes in requirements, students being closed out of courses or dropped from class rosters, or cases of students meeting graduation requirements.

**Discipline:** These include cases brought before Judiciaries.

**Discrimination:** These include instances whereby people feel as though they are not given equal access to opportunities because of race, ideology, status or gender.

**Dismissals/Terminations:** These include dismissals or terminations with faculty, staff or instructors in terms of employment.

**Employment:** Job postings before a person is hired, non-academic promotions, elimination of positions, and personnel policies are included here.

**Enrollment:** Problems gaining access to a course.

**Evaluation:** Problems associated with evaluation, usually referring to work related evaluations.

**Environmental/Treatment:** These cases include hostile environments and instances of incivility..

**Financial Aid/Scholarship:** These include all issues involving the process for receiving financial aid or scholarships.

**Grades:** These include grade appeal issues, most frequently beginning with our explaining the policies and procedures.

**Graduation Requirements:** Situations that involve insufficient credit hour, outstanding fees, failure to register

**Harassment:** All cases involving harassment are in this category.

**Health Insurance:** Problems associated with processing or qualifying for health insurance.

**Housing, Roommate Conflicts:** housing/meal contracts, or off-campus housing issues are in this category.

**Library:** Generally related to fines or loss of privileges.

**Parking:** Tickets, towing, troubles.

**Promotion and Tenure:** These include clarification or procedures and assisting in appeals for promotion and tenure.

**Registration:** Problems with registration such as forgetting to add or drop a course.

**Salary:** This area includes cases of individuals seeking information or equities.

**Other:** This is the catchall "other" category

