OHIO
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Office of the
University Ombudsman

2009-2010 Annual Report

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Office of the Ombudsman Annual Report
September 1, 2009– August 31, 2010

I. Introduction

This year celebrates the 40th 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 forty year history, 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 Ombudsman*
2010-present:	*Dianne Bouvier, M.A., M.B.A. Ombudsman*

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 Fall 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.

This academic year 2009-2010 was a difficult budget year for public institutions, and the Ombudsman position was reduced from a full-time appointment of an Administrative Staff member to a half-time, 11 month position, with no additional staff. The office continues to be housed on the fifth floor of the University Baker Center, which provides an accessible, confidential location for visitors.

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.

- ***Independent*** because services are provided outside the University's formal lines of authority - the Ombudsman is empowered to seek information as needed and to craft solutions toward the overall good when possible.

- ***Confidential*** because 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.

- ***Neutral*** because the Ombudsman strives to understand all perspectives in a situation and seeks outcomes that balance the needs of individuals with the requirements of the institution.

- ***Informal*** because while the Ombudsman is empowered to work outside the lines of authority to invite cooperation, influence decisions, and negotiate agreements, 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 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

2009-10 Activities of Ombudsman Merle Greybill and Dianne Bouvier

The academic year of 2009-10 was a time of transition for the office leadership. Merle Greybill performed the duties of the ombudsman in a distance capacity while a search was conducted. In March 2010, Dianne Bouvier was appointed to the position.

Internal
- Updated the website for the office (see: www.ohio.edu/Ombuds)
- 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 national conference "IOA and New Orleans: Rebirth, Rebuild, Respond!" sponsored by the International Ombudsman Association
- Participated in webinar on "Bullying in the Workplace"

Outreach
- Met with new officials and office contacts around the University to introduce myself as the Ombudsman and discuss the office's purpose
- Introduced by Executive Vice President and Provost to Faculty, Administrative, and Classified Senates
- Presented on the office's purpose at Classified Senate Meeting (April, 2010)
- Participated at the annual Health and Wellness Fair (August, 2008)
- 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
- Assisted 236+ visitors to the office with their concerns

II. 2009-10 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 was collected on 236 situations that the Ombudsman was presented with by visitors to the office during the academic year 2009-10, as shown in Table 1 below. Spring quarter shows the greatest number of cases. This annual report shifts the reporting cycle from a fiscal year reporting cycle (summer, fall, winter, spring) to an academic year reporting cycle (fall, winter, spring, summer), in order to better reflect the year's activities. The data does not include the 16 cases from the Summer of 2009. 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 236 people.

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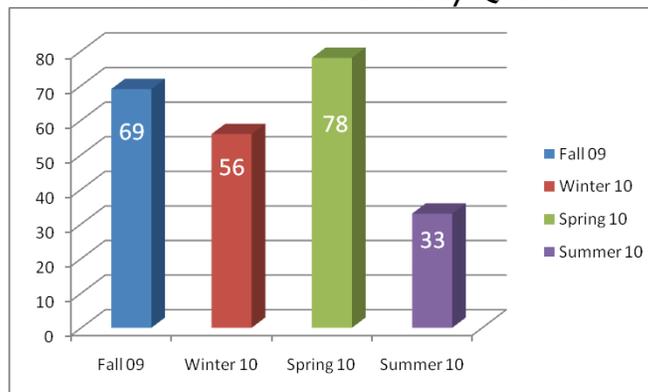
Visitors contact the office by various means. As shown in Table 2, most initial contacts were made by phone (58%) or email (23%); about 16% initially made an office visit, and 18% had an office visit as their second contact.

Table 2. Initial and Follow-up Means of Contact (percentages)
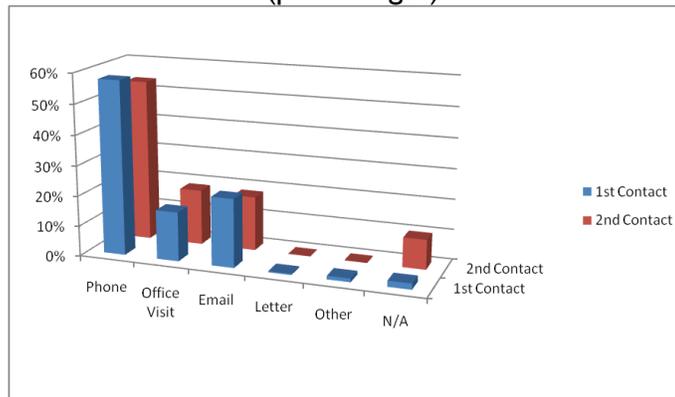
Many visitors come to the Ombuds Office to explain their concerns, be heard, seek advice and/or information, and gain a new perspective. While it is common perception that Ombudsman conduct many mediations, often visitors elect to resolve issues on their own after consultation. In some cases, mediations 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 (165 cases) and Counseling/Advising/Coaching (131 cases) are the two most common interventions.

Table 3. Type of Intervention (numbers)
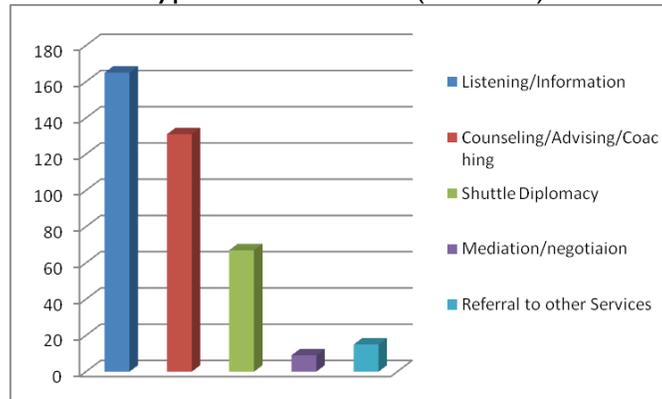
The Outcomes of Cases in Table 4 provides general outcomes for visitors. In some cases, there may have been more than one outcome. A new category was added this year, "Consultation provided," to reflect the visitor who seeks policy advice and answers about procedures; often these visitors feel comfortable addressing their own situations, but seek a confidential way to gather information. Not all issues have a positive resolution, and in many cases (over one-third) 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 relay 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)
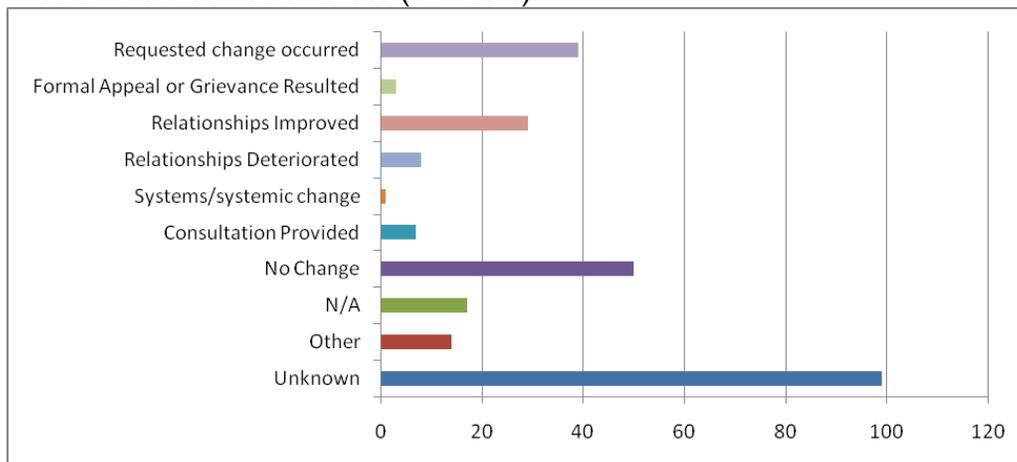
Many issues could not be resolved without the cooperation of individuals in other units; Table 5 reflects the inter-relatedness of our campus. The Ombudsman appreciates the support received throughout the year in responding to the issues brought forward.

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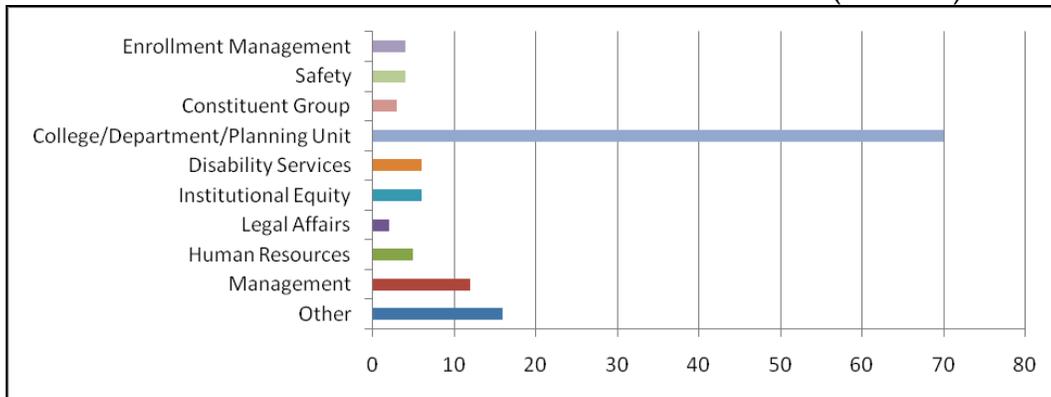
Nature of Issues and Concerns Brought to the Ombudsman

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 236 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:

- Budget reductions result in fewer staff undertaking increased workloads with little hope for improvement.

- Some employees report they are apprehensive about expressing concerns, feel anxious that their position will be eliminated, have increased job dissatisfaction, and experience stress-related health issues.

- During a period of continually changing campus processes, students and parents view administrative processes as being confusing, inflexible, not student-centered, and costly.

- 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, predominantly female, seeking tenure and promotion.

- The national economy is affecting students and parents, challenging whether students can successfully complete their academic programs. Difficulties are exacerbated when courses are unavailable (i.e., required courses which are offered once/year are filled, potentially delaying graduation by one year.)

- Along with the expansion of E-Learning offerings, there are more concerns about Blackboard, on-line academic dishonesty, on-line course development and ownership, technology difficulties, and e-classroom "behavior."

- Increased use of temporary and interim appointments creates stress and uncertainty during a time of budget challenges.

- International students, primarily graduate students, have concerns about university fee charges, cost of living expenses, graduate/teaching assistantship expectations, and English language requirements.

- 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.

- Perception that leadership could do more to foster increased civility, community, and caring for employees in the workplace.

- Lack of understanding of disability processes for students and faculty and of how to assist students in appropriately requesting accommodations in a timely fashion. Need for educating managers and supervisors about providing appropriate disability accommodations in the workplace.

- Lack of clear due process for terminating student employees.

Ohio University Office of the Ombudsman

International Ombudsman Association
UNIFORM REPORTING CATEGORIES FOR ISSUES/CONCERNS

2009/2010 Academic Year

CATEGORY	# Concerns
1 Compensation & Benefits Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.	
Sub-total	**0**
1.a *Compensation (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)*	0
1.b *Payroll (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)*	0
1.c *Benefits (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)*	0
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:*	0
Other 1:	
Other 2:	
Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)	
2 Evaluative Relationships Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)	
Sub-total	**302**
2.a *Priorities, Values, Beliefs (differences about what should be considered important - or most important –often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)*	8
2.b *Respect, Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate behavior, disregard for people, rudeness, crudeness, etc.*	59
2.c *Trust, Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)*	14
2.d *Reputation (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)*	3
2.e *Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication)*	26
2.f *Bullying, Mobbing (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)*	2
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)*	6
2.h *Retaliation (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)*	5
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)*	12
2.k *Feedback (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)*	2
2.l *Consultation (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)*	61

2.m	**Performance Appraisal/Grading** (job performance in formal or informal evaluation)	34
2.n	**Grading (academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)**	35
2.o	**Departmental Climate** (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility)	8
2.p	**Supervisory Effectiveness** (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)	10
2.q	**Insubordination** (refusal to do what is asked)	3
2.r	**Discipline** (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)	5
2.s	**Equity of Treatment** (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)	6
2.t	**Other** (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	3
	Other 1:	
	Other 2:	
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)	

3	**Peer and Colleague Relationships** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization).	
	Sub-total	**19**
3.a	**Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important - or most important –often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)	1
3.b	**Respect, Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.	3
3.c	**Trust, Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)	0
3.d	**Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)	3
3.e	**Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)	5
3.f	**Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)	0
3.g	**Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)	7
3.h	**Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)	0
3.i	**Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)	0
3.j	**Other** (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	0
	Other 1:	
	Other 2:	
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)	

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

		Sub-total	18
4.a	**Job Application, Selection and Recruitment Processes** (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)		1
4.b	**Job Classification and Description** (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)		1
4.c	**Involuntary Transfer, Change of Assignment** (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)		3
4.d	**Tenure-Position Security, Ambiguity** (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories), Career Progression (Promotion, Reappointment, or Tenure)		6
4.e	**Career Progression** (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)		1
4.f	**Rotation and Duration of Assignment** (non-completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)		0
4.g	**Resignation** (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)		0
4.h	**Termination/Non-Renewal** (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)		4
4.i	**Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff** (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)		0
4.j	**Position Elimination** (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)		0
4.k	**Career Development/Coaching/Mentoring** (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)		1
4.l	**Other** (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above categories) Please specify below:		1
	Other 1:		
	Other 2:		
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)		

5	**Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse.		
		Sub-total	10
5.a	**Criminal Activity** (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)		2
5.b	**Business and Financial Practices** (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)		2
5.c	**Harassment** (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video, psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)		3
5.d	**Discrimination** (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc.[being part of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category - applies in the U.S.])		0

5.e	**Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation** (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)	2
5.f	**Accessibility** (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)	0
5.g	**Intellectual Property Rights** (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)	0
5.h	**Privacy and Security of Information** (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)	0
5.i	**5.i. Property Damage** (personal property damage, liabilities)	0
5.j	**Other** (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	1
	Other 1:	
	Other 2:	
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)	

6	**Safety, Health, and Physical Environment** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.	
	Sub-total	**2**
6.a	**Safety** (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for safety training and equipment)	1
6.b	**Physical Working/Living Conditions** (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)	0
6.c	**Ergonomics** (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)	0
6.d	**Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)	0
6.e	**Security** (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying "compromise of classified or top secret" information)	0
6.f	**Telework, Flexplace** (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)	0
6.g	**Safety Equipment** (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)	0
6.h	**Environmental Policies** (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)	0
6.i	**Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance** (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)	0
6.j	**Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above categories) Please specify below:	1
	Other 1:	
	Other 2:	
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)	

|		
7	**Services/Administrative Issues** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.	
	Sub-total	**106**
7.a	**Quality of Services** (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)	14

7.b	**Responsiveness, Timeliness** *(time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)*	11
7.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.)*	66
7.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)*	0
7.e	**Course availability; completing degree in timely fashion**	15
7.f	**Other** *(any services or administrative issue not described by the above categories)* *Please specify below:*	0
	Other 1:	
	Other 2:	
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)	

8	**Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.	
	Sub-total	**17**
8.a	**Strategic and Mission-Related, Strategic and Technical Management** *(principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)*	1
8.b	**Leadership and Management** *(quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)*	3
8.c	**Use of Positional Power, Authority** *(lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)*	0
8.d	**Communication** *(content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)*	2
8.e	**Restructuring and Relocation** *(issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, eg. downsizing, offshoring, outsourcing)*	6
8.f	**Organizational Climate** *(issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)*	3
8.g	**Change Management** *(making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)*	2
8.h	**Priority Setting and/or Funding** *(disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)*	0
8.i	**Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results** *(scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)*	0
8.j	**Interdepartment, Interorganization Work, Territory** *(disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)*	0
8.k	**Other** *(any organizational issue not described by the above categories)* Please specify below:	0
	Other 1:	
	Other 2:	
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)	

		Sub-total	7
9	**Values, Ethics, and Standards** Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.		
9.a	*Standards of Conduct (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)*		3
9.b	*Values and Culture (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)*		3
9.c	*Scientific Conduct, Integrity (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)*		0
9.d	*Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8 (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, eg., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)*		1
9.e	*Other (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above categories) Please specify below:*		0
	Other 1:		
	Other 2:		
	Other 3:(add additional rows, if necessary)		
	TOTAL		**481**

Visitors to the Office in 2009-2010

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, in percentages, the visitor's affiliation, campus, gender, race, affiliated unit, and the relationship between the visitor and person/area of concern. Overall changes from the 2008-09 Annual Report to this reporting cycle will be noted.

Table 6. Visitor's Affiliation (percent of total)
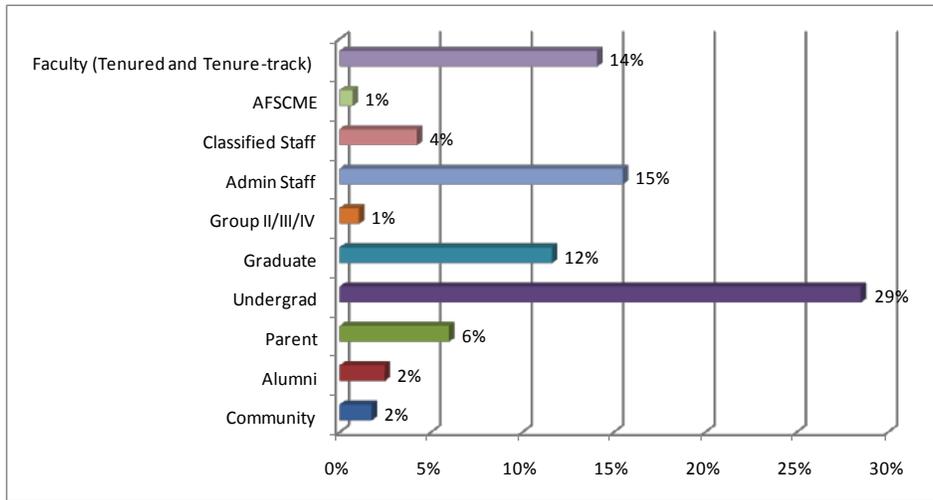
Visitors with the following affiliations increased from previous year: community, parent, undergraduate student, faculty (all Groups), and non-bargaining classified employees. Parents had the greatest increase, from 1% to 6% of the visitors in 2009-2010.

Visitors with the following affiliations decreased in percentage from last year: graduate students, bargaining unit staff, and alumni.

Table 7. Visitor's Academic or Support Unit (percent of total)
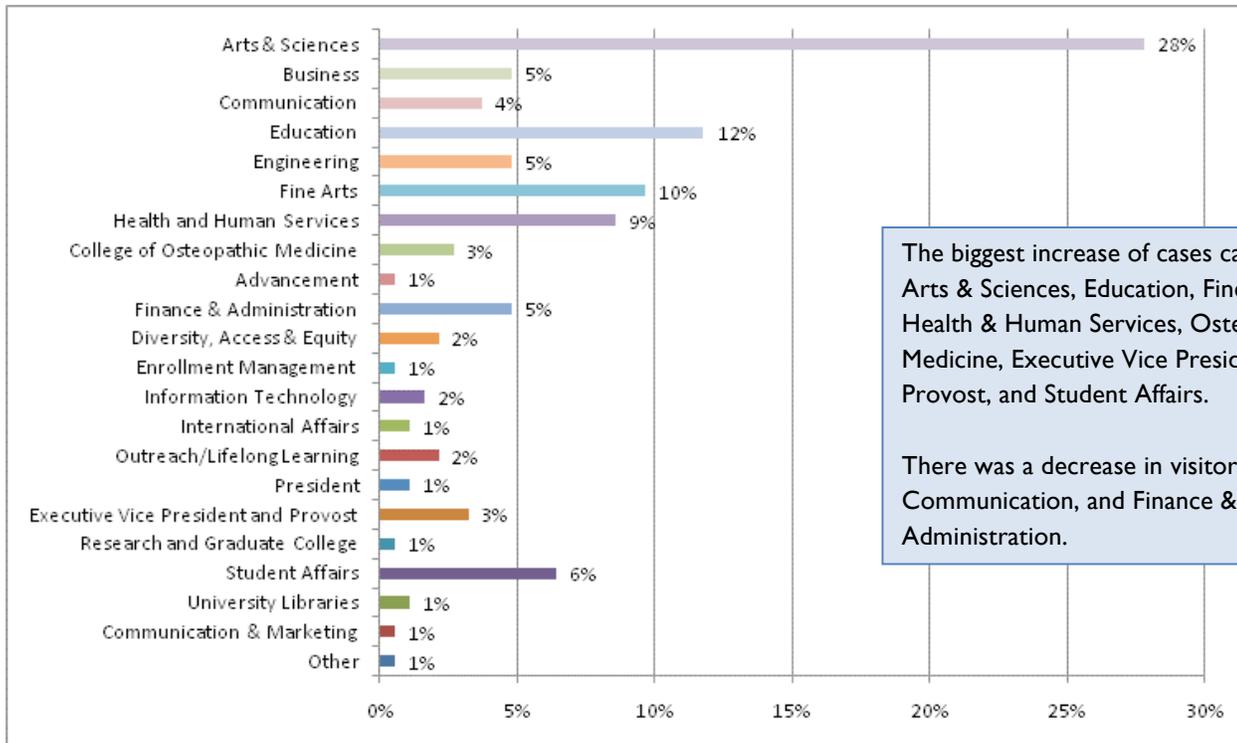
The biggest increase of cases came from Arts & Sciences, Education, Fine Arts, Health & Human Services, Osteopathic Medicine, Executive Vice President and Provost, and Student Affairs.

There was a decrease in visitors from Communication, and Finance & Administration.

Table 8. Visitor's Campus (percent of total)
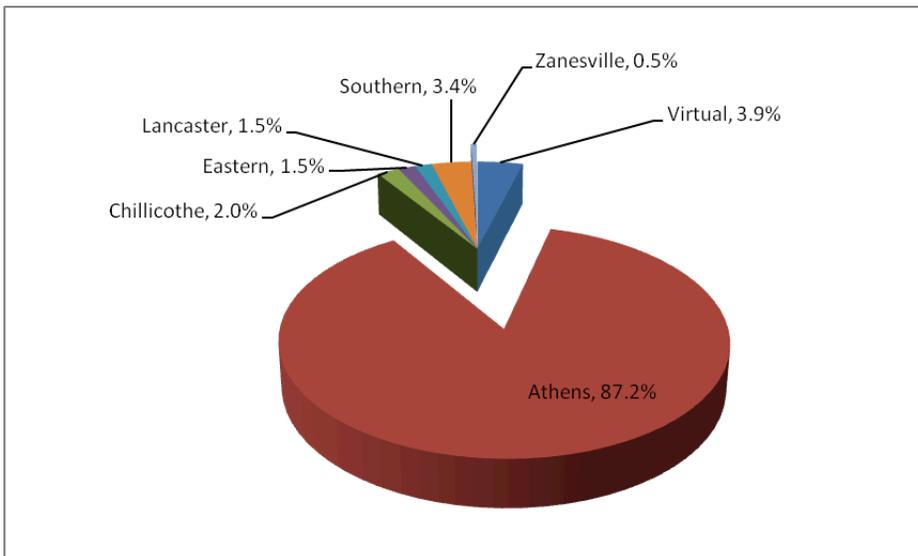
The Ombuds Office continues to have visitors from all campuses, as well as those involved through distance and on-line learning.

Table 9. Visitor's Gender (percent)
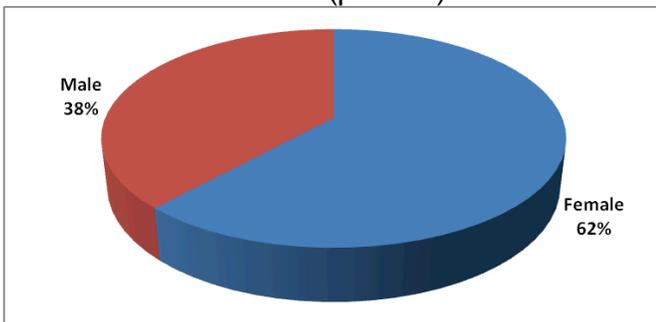
The percentage of male and female visitors has not changed significantly since last year.

Table 10. Visitor's Race/Ethnicity (percent)
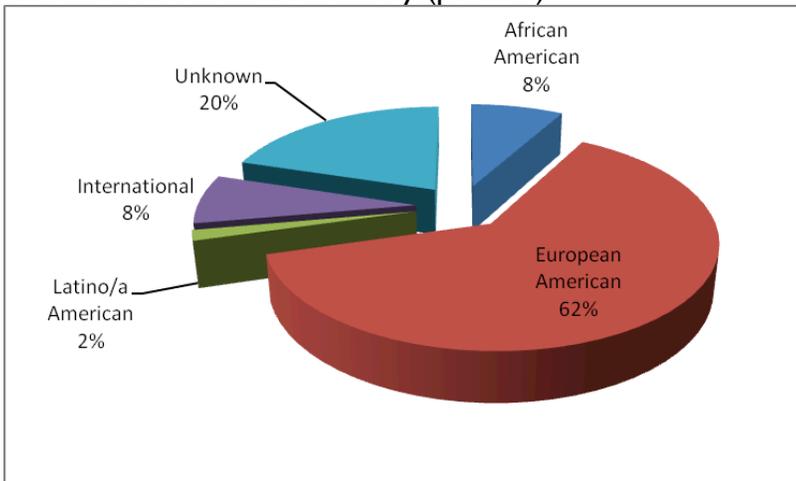
There was a slight increase in the percentage of African Americans visiting the office (from 7% in 2008-09 to 8% in 2009-20) and Latino/s from 1% to 2%; and a decrease in the percentage of international students (from 15% to 8%). Race was not always captured because many contacts are by phone.

Table 11. Relationship between Visitor and Person/Area of Concern (percentage of cases)
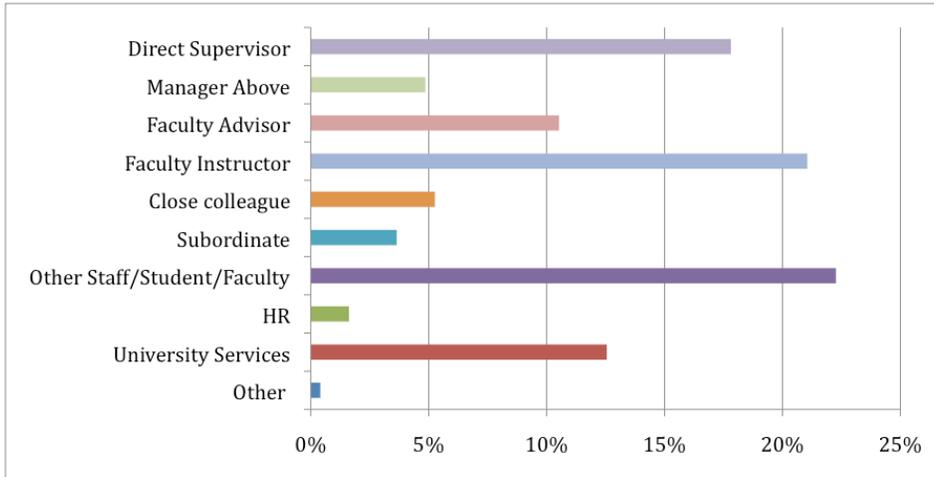
There were twice as many cases involving a person's direct supervisor (from 22 in 2008-09 to 44 cases in 2009-2010). There was an increase in cases involving a faculty instructor (from 44 to 52), and a decrease in cases concerning University Services (from 47 to 31).

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 (number)
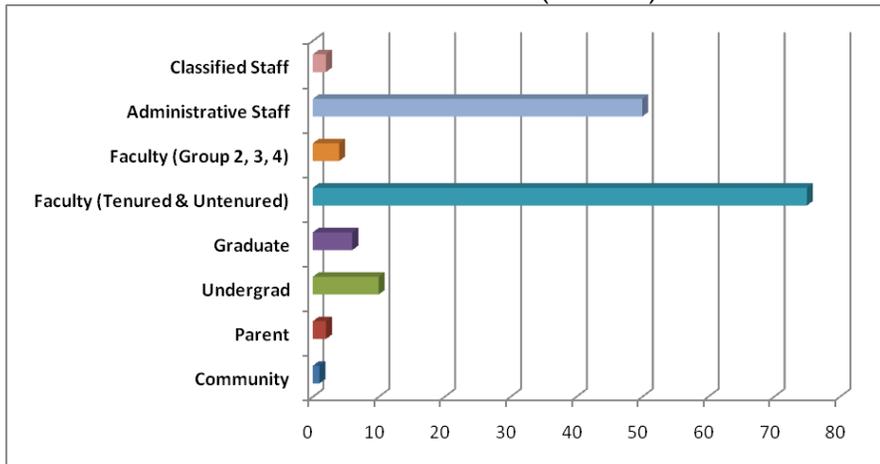
Most cases involved tenured and tenure-track faculty as the person of concern; numbers remained fairly constant from last year (from 73 to 75 cases). Cases involving administrative staff nearly doubled, from 29 in 2008-09 to 50 cases in 2009-2010.

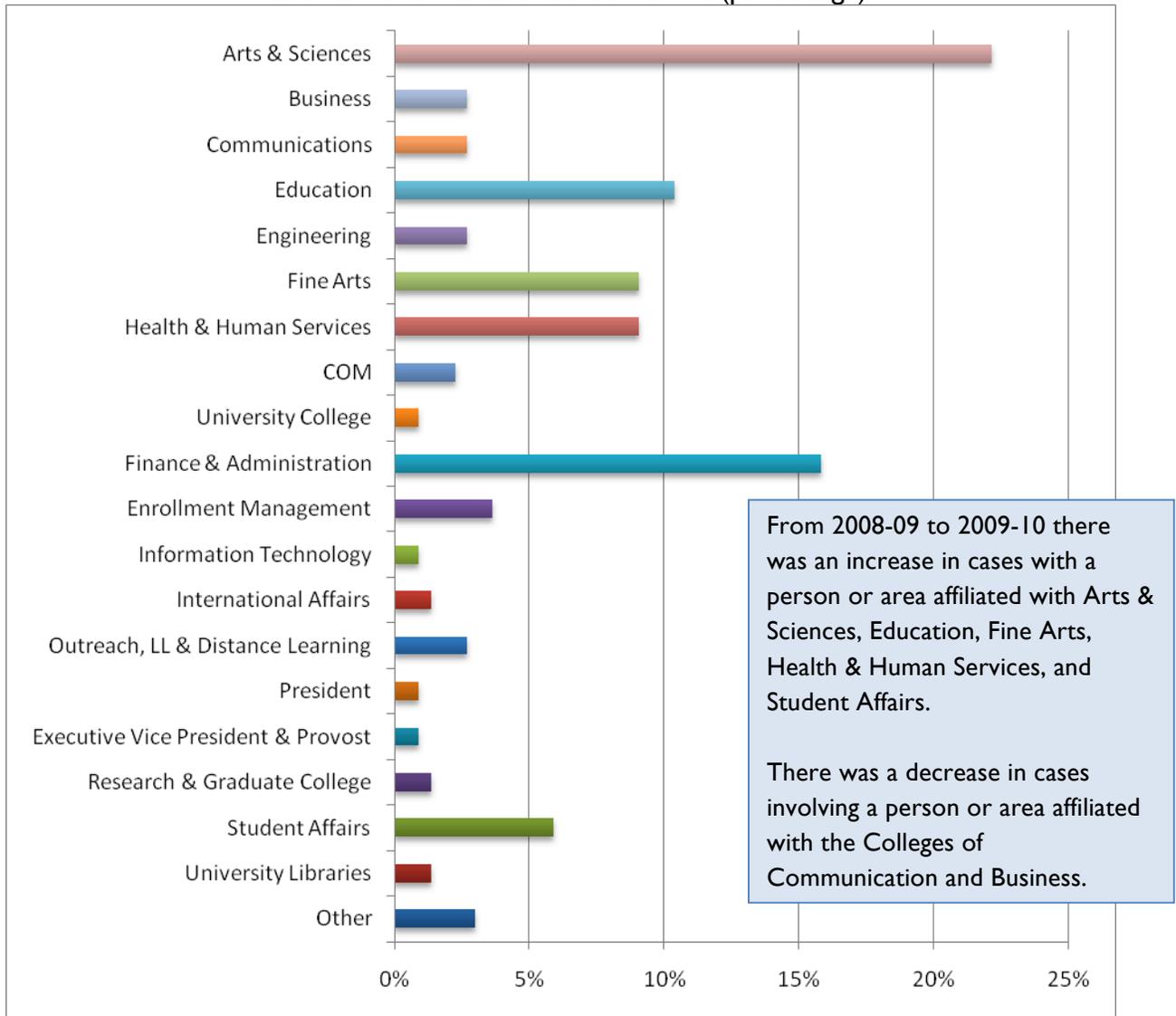## Table 13. Person/area of concern's unit (percentage)

From 2008-09 to 2009-10 there was an increase in cases with a person or area affiliated with Arts & Sciences, Education, Fine Arts, Health & Human Services, and Student Affairs.

There was a decrease in cases involving a person or area affiliated with the Colleges of Communication and Business.

Table 15. Person/Area of Concern's Campus (percent)

Southern, 3.4%
Zanesville, 0.5%
Lancaster, 1.5%
Virtual, 3.9%
Eastern, 1.5%
Chillicothe, 2.0%
Athens, 87.2%
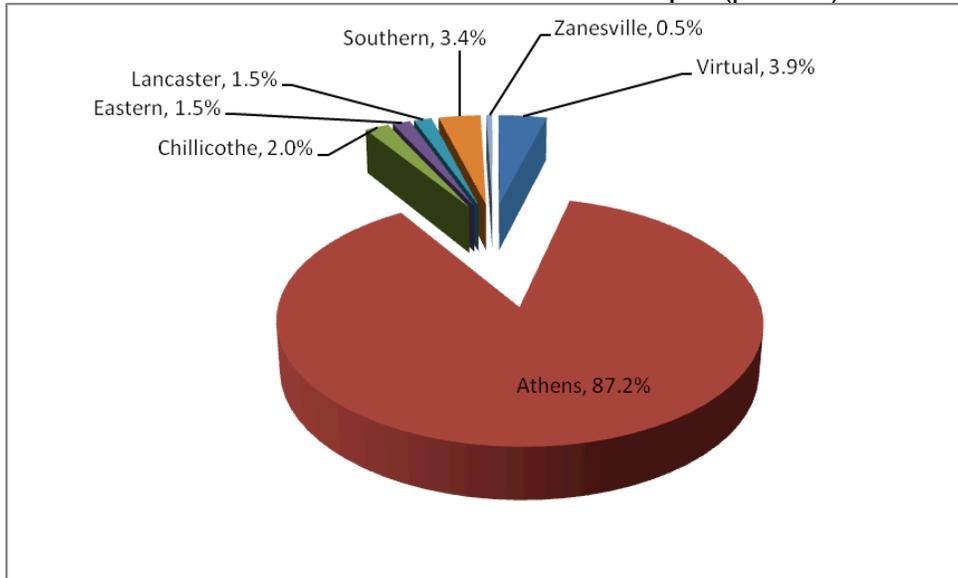
Table 16. Person/Area of Concern's Gender (percent)

Male 30%
N/A 43%
Female 27%
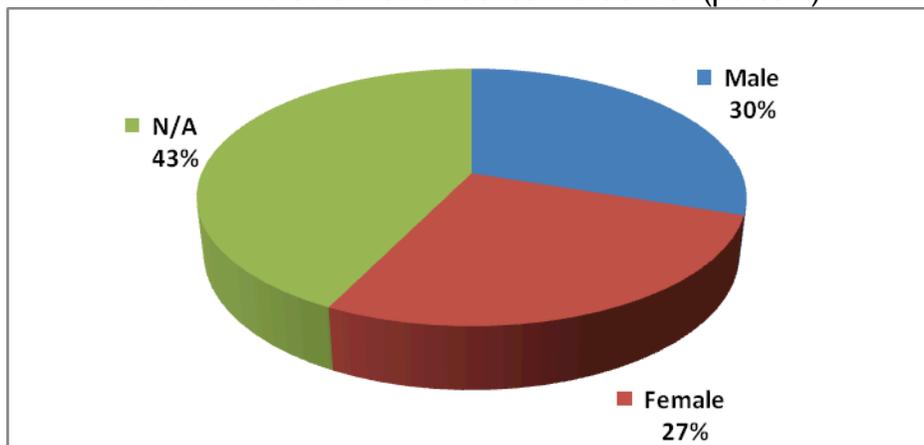
Table 17. Person/Area of Concern's Race/ethnicity (percent)

Asian American 1%
African American 3%
European American 36%
N/A 58%
International 2%
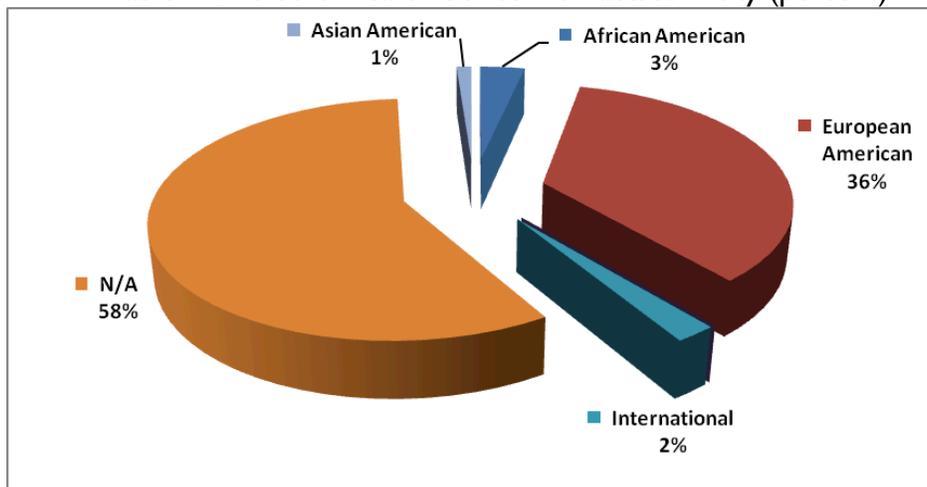
III. Analysis and Recommendations

A comparison of the data from this year with the 2008-09 data and annual report shows a few changes that should be noted.

Cases increased from 188 in 2008-09 to 236 in 2009-10. Possible reasons for this change include:
- The resumed on-campus presence of an ombudsman
- The location of the office as an independent, accessible office
- Increased numbers of persons needing a confidential resource for responding to their situation, particularly for those uncertain about job security and not wishing to 'rock the boat'.

This year, the Ombudsman position changed from a year-round full-time to 11-month part-time. The increased caseload and the part-time status of the position poses challenges to developing the pro-active professional capacity and service of the office and limits the office's ability to provide up-to-date reports to the university community and recommendations to departments for systemic changes. The Executive Vice Provost serves in a "back-up" capacity for emergencies when the office is closed; this support is helpful although may temporarily create potential conflicts of interest for some situations.

Of note is that over half of the cases concern evaluative relationships such as supervisor evaluations, perceptions of treatment, grade appeals, supervisory effectiveness, peer-to-peer relationships, and communication. Related to the evaluative nature of a university community is that an increasing number of deans, chairs and department heads are calling the Ombuds Office for consultation on various issues, including handling of employee disputes, discussion of application of policy or procedures, collegiality issues, and student concerns.

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

Employees

1. Faculty
   Similar numbers of cases were heard concerning Group I (tenured and tenure-track) faculty members, which continues to represent the largest number of persons of concern.

2. Group II Faculty
   Group II's depend on departments/schools for employment continuation. In some areas, departmental politics and alignments make it difficult for these faculty members to confront underlying issues of fairness and perceptions of favoritism. One recommendation is that the University could assist Group II faculty in investigating short-term or alternate employment options such as e-learning when the positions are in jeopardy.

3. Administrative Decisions
   Similar to last year, there were proportionally more cases about administrative staff, with questions about fairness of decisions and the application of rules, including the fairness of fees, difficulties with website registration and technology, and financial holds; as well as concerns about supervisors, communication about reorganizing units, and treatment received during this process. Some of these issues reflect the current budget difficulties which have led to reductions in resources, fewer staff, and increased responsibilities; employees seem to be hard-pressed to have the time to thoroughly listen to concerns or explain decisions.

Almost a quarter of the cases involve administrative decisions and application of rules, quality of service, and/or timeliness of response. Midway through the year a new category was added to capture the issue of "course availability and difficulty in completing programs on time;" 15 cases fell into this category.

4. Status and treatment of Women
    Women continue to present issues related to their employment: the inappropriate consideration of maternity leave in tenure and promotion deliberations, treatment at office meetings, and salary inequities. Women who stand up for equal treatment and in support of services for female students report they are not consistently supported.

    One positive effort is that during the 2010-2011 year, the Vice Provost for Diversity, Access and Equity is creating a Pregnancy Task Force to make recommendations to the Executive Vice President and Provost regarding parental leave and other issues affecting parents (students, faculty and staff), faculty who teach students with young children, and departments affected by family issues.

5. Physical Plant Renovations
    Renovations and natural catastrophes that impact physical plant workplace settings could create unsafe working conditions leading to increased health concerns, employee absences, and difficulties in maintaining workflow. Whether or not the ADA is invoked by employees in a unit, one recommendation is that areas undergoing physical remodeling or renovation need to pro-actively consider temporarily moving work units to another setting and encourage flex-time and work-at-home options in order to safeguard positive health for our employees.

Students
6. Graduate Students
    Proportionally fewer graduate students came to the Ombudsman, but their concerns are still similar to past years: difficulties in completing their dissertation in a timely fashion, feeling powerless when issues develop with their advisor, and perceiving that they are "caught in the middle" with departmental politics. Students do not always have a clear understanding regarding who has the authority to make changes to their dissertation committee or what the process is for changing advisors or committee members, without fear of retaliation.

7. International graduate students
    With the increase in numbers of international students on campus, it would aid retention efforts to understand the issues they are facing which make it difficult to continue as a student here. Some graduate students misunderstand what "Tuition and Fees" include. Students receiving T/A or G/A stipends with tuition scholarships often think that all fees will be covered, and so fail to calculate the additional General Fees in anticipated expenses. Students also need clarity about roles and expectations associated with T/A and G/A assignments, kinds of duties, time commitment, and professional behavior standards.

    English language proficiency also has implications for retention. Some graduate students begin their academic career in OPIE, while others have passed the TOEFL test indicating they have attained language proficiency. Compounding this is that students are ineligible for assistantships while enrolled in OPIE.

Students who come here often have high expectations for completing a degree, and being dismissed from an academic program due to failure to meet academic expectations causes them to "lose face" with their home family, community, and sponsoring organizations. The timing of academic dismissal decisions is further complicated by the need for arranging airfare, stopping rental leases, and visa requirements. One recommendation is to develop support strategies early when students and faculty first encounter difficulties may avert some of these circumstances.

Additional recommendations are that the Graduate College, International Student and Faculty Services Office, and Academic units need to collaborate to develop clear messages for future graduate students. Guidelines about fees, costs, residency, language proficiency requirements, expectations for graduate teaching and research assistantships prior to attending Ohio University would help alleviate some of these circumstances. One recommendation is to develop a series of on-line videos of current students discussing issues and strategies for success that would assist students in understanding what to anticipate.

8. International Students
Considering the increased numbers of international students, the decrease in cases may signify that serious problem do not exist for international students or that they are unaware of the services of the Office. The Ombudsman has begun to attend International Student Orientations to explain the role of the office. Cases involving international students are often more complex.

Some international students come from countries where an "Ombudsman" follows a "Classical Ombudsman" model which is more formal and may have an "investigatory" role; American universities follow the "Organizational Ombudsman" model, which is an informal, confidential problem-solving resource. International students may need assistance in understanding the unique role of the Ombudsman on campus.

9. Student Employment
In some departments there is a lack of training for supervisors of student employees and lack of clear due process procedures when students are terminated. Often these students depend on this income to stay enrolled, influencing retention for lower income students. One recommendation is to develop protocol for terminating student employees and an on-line or in-person training program for supervisors, which includes educationally appropriate termination processes and procedures.

10. Parental concerns
Proportionally more calls came from parents with concerns about business processes, lack of course availability, advising concerns, judicial decisions, timeliness in responding to issues, and anger at being "dismissed" in the name of FERPA. One difficulty is the ability of the staff, after eight years of budget cuts, to fully respond to all concerns. Parents become more involved with cases when finances are impacted; many parents express that they are having difficulties financially due to the current economic times.

Campus-wide issues
11. Academic dishonesty
Similar to last year, the range of options and inconsistency of responses to situations involving academic dishonesty continued during the 2009-2010. Some students were dropped from classes,

some received failing grades for an assignment or a course, and some were sent to Judiciaries for breaching the Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, some students lost their academic scholarships.

Students report that they feel they are "assumed guilty" prior to any due process, including the chance to demonstrate their thought and writing processes. Some students comments during visits to the Ombuds Office indicate little understanding of what they allegedly did wrong, still not understanding appropriate citation methods. While lack of intent is not an excuse for plagiarizing, the institution's formal response does not always include educating our students on how to prevent plagiarism from reoccurring.

Faculty indicate they are sincerely concerned when there is evidence of plaguarism. With the availability of electronic software for assessing plagiarism, faculty feel they can provide students with "proof" that some percentage of their paper was plagiarized.

Continued conversation and a more uniform response to academic integrity issues are still needed. This issue merits institutional conversation and the Ombudsman recommends that the Provost's Office and Faculty Senate form a Task Force to review our current policies and practices and seek best practices from other institutions to create a procedure that assures fairness, consistency, and due process for all students.

12. Distance and on-line learning
    The increase in numbers of distance and on-line courses, programs and enrollment has led to more calls coming to the Ombuds Office. The grade appeal process is less clear when the faculty member teaching an on-line course is not employed by the home academic department. Electronic platforms work well for those students who are technologically savvy, but place-bound older students who seek an alternative to classroom education may have a steep learning curve. Communicating solely via email and Blackboard is often difficult. Maintaining a civil, respectful on-line "classroom" creates new challenges. Another difficulty is the ability to monitor and assure the authorship of students' assignments and tests in a virtual setting. Students anticipate more access to faculty or outside services, and faculty are unable to provide large virtual classrooms with the same one-on-one attention they provide to on-campus students. In addition, distance students feel unjustifiably burdened with Wellbeing and Student Legal fees.

    The Regional Higher Education area is working to develop policies and procedures to respond to these issues.

13. Disability accommodation
    The ADA and ADAAA Regulations are increasingly being interpreted more 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.

Conclusion

"There are many persons ready to do what is right because in their heart they know it is right. But they hesitate, waiting for the other fellow [person] to make the first move- and he [or she], in turn, waits for you."[1] *Marion Anderson*

In the 40th year of existence, the Ombuds Office has become an integral part of the campus problem-solving structure. During a year of leadership changes, shifting internal expectations, economic strains, and external uncertainty, many members of our community feel the stress and pressure that builds around this type of atmosphere. This period also poses new opportunities for efficiency and renewed vision toward centering efforts on educating students, as well as providing a climate for professional growth and development for our employees.

Future plans for the office include developing an office Terms of Reference or Charter, which is recommended as a best practice by the International Ombudsman Association. This document would clarify the role, practices, authority, and responsibilities for the Ombuds Office at Ohio University.

In my capacity as Ombudsman, I often call administrators and faculty to assist in resolving cases. In most cases, I am met with respect and genuine interest in finding fair solutions, and I appreciate the support I receive. We, as a campus community, have the ability to foster an equitable and fair academic and working climate and to do "what is right."

With gratitude and humility, I submit this report to the University community,

Dianne Bouvier

[1] (http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/marian_anderson.htm)