

UCMERCED

Office of Ombuds Services



Annual Report 2012-2013

MESSAGE FROM THE CAMPUS OMBUDS

Thank you for your interest in the annual report for UC Merced's Office of Ombuds Services. This report is offered to provide as much transparency as possible, while at the same time maintaining the confidentiality of the people who visited the office over the past year.

UC Merced is unique in that it is the first new American research university built in the 21st century. It is the 10th campus in the University of California system and opened with graduate students in 2004 and the first class of undergraduates in 2005. The campus prides itself on interdisciplinary innovation, diversity, sustainability and personal interactions. UCM has the most diverse undergraduate population in the UC system by percentages, with nearly 40% of its undergraduates coming from Hispanic backgrounds in 2012.

It is within the above context that the Office of Ombuds Services was established in 2012. Unlike some other campuses across the country, the motivation for the creation of the Office was not in response to any particular protest or unrest. Faculty, staff and students had been requesting the position for a number of years as a place for the campus community to turn to and use as a confidential resource. Chancellor Leland's motivation to create the office was to ensure that members of the campus community receive fair and equitable treatment.

The Office of Ombuds Services staff is guided by the International Ombuds Association's (IOA) four operational principles of:

- **Confidentiality**
- **Neutrality**
- **Informality**
- **Independence**

We spent much of the year publicizing the services as well as educating the campus community around the four principles. The services we offer are unique for the following reasons; 1) we serve the entire campus, 2) we maintain complete confidentiality and 3) do not serve as an office of notice for the university. This allows visitors freedom in choosing their own paths in dealing with their conflict.

The purpose of this report is to inform the campus community about the work of the Office of Ombuds Services. Information included in this report is general in nature and does not contain any identifiable information regarding specific incidents or visitors to the office. The report covers the inaugural academic year of the UC Merced office, July 16, 2012 through June 30, 2013.

It has been a privilege and an honor to work with visitors and I welcome any feedback on how we can improve our outreach and services.

Sincerely,

Deidre (De) Acker

HISTORY OF THE OFFICE

The Office of Ombuds Services was established at the University of California, Merced in 2012 by Chancellor Dorothy Leland. Deidre (De) Acker was appointed as UC Merced's first campus Ombuds on July 16, 2012.

The campus Ombuds position was created to serve as an alternative resource, providing confidential, neutral, informal, and independent dispute resolution and mediation services to the campus community. The mission of the office is to ensure that members of the university community receive fair and equitable treatment by supplementing—not replacing—existing university resources for conflict resolution. The office also serves as a campus resource for senior officials in the formulation of policy and procedures, raising issues that may surface as a result of discrepancy between the stated goals of the university and actual practice.

The Office of Ombuds Services adheres to the ethical principles stated in the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice.

On October 11, 2012 the Charter Agreement between the Office of Ombuds Services and the Chancellor Dorothy Leland was signed. The Charter Agreement provides the institutional understanding of the standards of practice and code of ethics and the authority and limits of the Office of Ombuds Services at UC Merced.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

The Office of Ombuds Services staff abides by the International Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice. These ethical tenets are the foundation of the organizational Ombuds profession:

Confidentiality: the identity of visitors and the content of their conversation will remain confidential. Only with permission of the visitor would the Office of Ombuds Services contact other individuals to help resolve a dispute. The only exception to confidentiality is in cases where the Ombuds determines there is risk of imminent harm to self or others.

Communications made to the Ombuds does not constitute notice to the university.

Informality: the Office of Ombuds Services has no decision-making authority and maintains no records. The Office of Ombuds Services staff members do not participate in formal procedures or processes. The use of the services provided by the office is strictly voluntary.

Neutrality/Impartiality: The Office of Ombuds Services maintains no personal stake in the outcome in any dispute. The Office of Ombuds Services staff members avoid situations in which there may be conflicts of interest. The Office of Ombuds Services does not advocate for any individual or university department.

Independence: The Office of Ombuds Services exercise autonomy regarding its responsibilities. The Campus Ombuds reports to the Chancellor for administrative and budgetary purposes only, and does not report on specific cases.



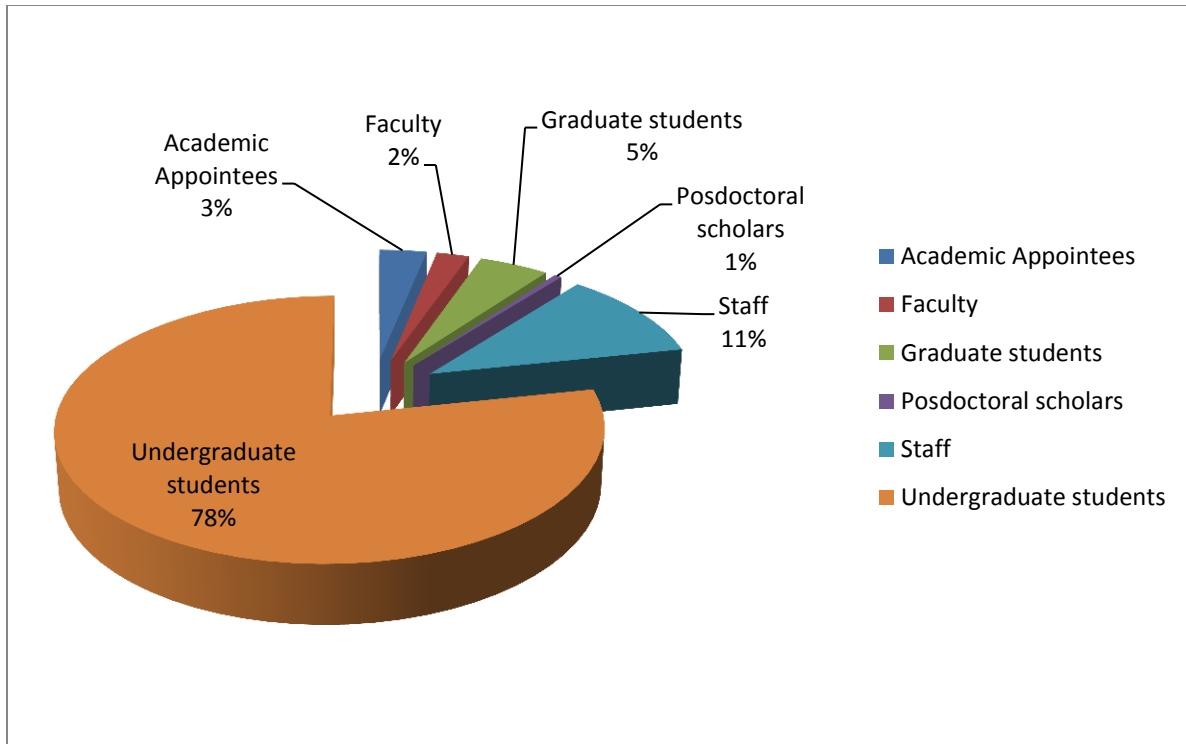
FIRST YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Charter Agreement was signed by the Chancellor and the Campus Ombuds on October 11, 2012. The [UCM Office of Ombuds Charter Agreement](#) is a document that explains the purpose and scope of services provided by the office, the [IOA Standards of Practice](#) and [IOA Code of Ethics](#) that the office and its staff adhere to as well as the authority and limits of the Campus Ombuds and office.
- Established an office location, as well as individual offices, for the Campus Ombuds and an Analyst and Intake Coordinator.
- Developed an appointment calendaring system that ensures privacy and confidentiality for all visitors.
- Created and maintained a website at [Office of Ombuds Services](#).
- Joined the active network of UC Ombuds and the Northern California Ombuds.
- Established an Ombuds Advisory Committee [Office of Ombuds Advisory Committee](#), comprised of independently selected representatives from all six campus constituencies.
- Hired a full- time Analyst and Intake Coordinator.
- Created and facilitated training programs for staff and students on leadership and conflict resolution.
- Developed marketing and publicity materials such as a bookmark, pens and stress balls.
- Created an administrative assessment plan to provide a consistent means of measuring the effectiveness of the services and programs, built on a foundation for continuous improvement and laid a framework for strategic planning as the office provides services to the UC Merced community.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND PRESENTING ISSUES FROM OMBUDS VISITORS

The Office of Ombuds Services welcomes students, staff, faculty, lecturers, postdoctoral scholars, administrators and anyone who is affiliated with the university to use its services.

Chart 1: Campus Demographics fall 2012

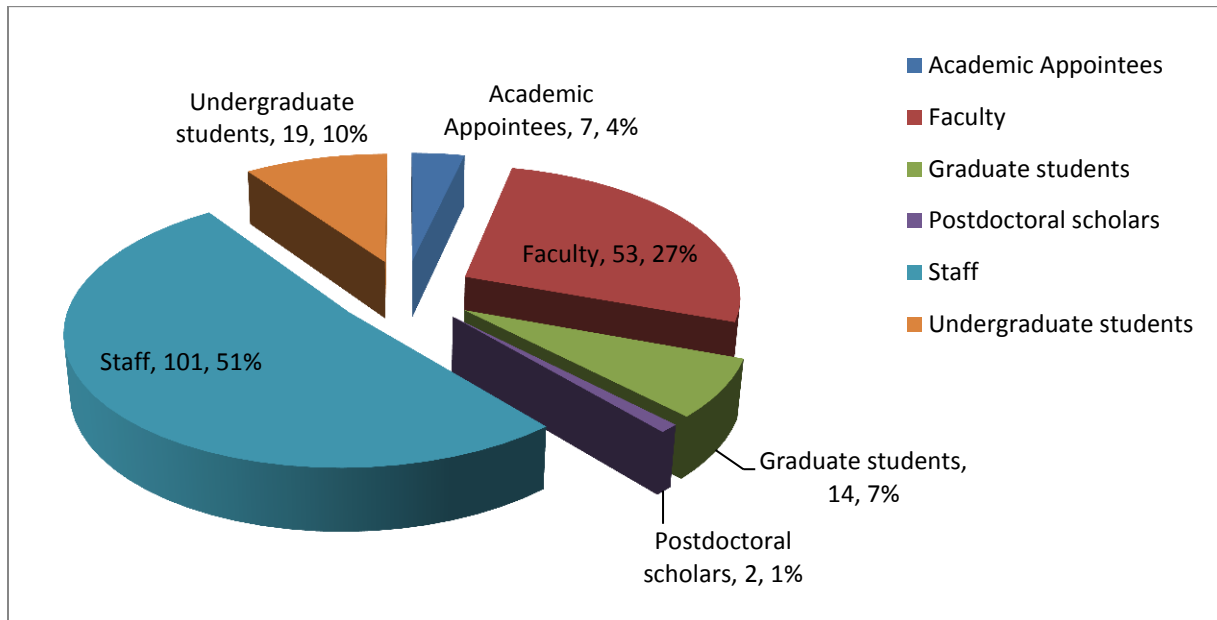


(Academic Appointees include lecturers and staff researchers)

OMBUDS CASELOAD DEMOGRAPHICS

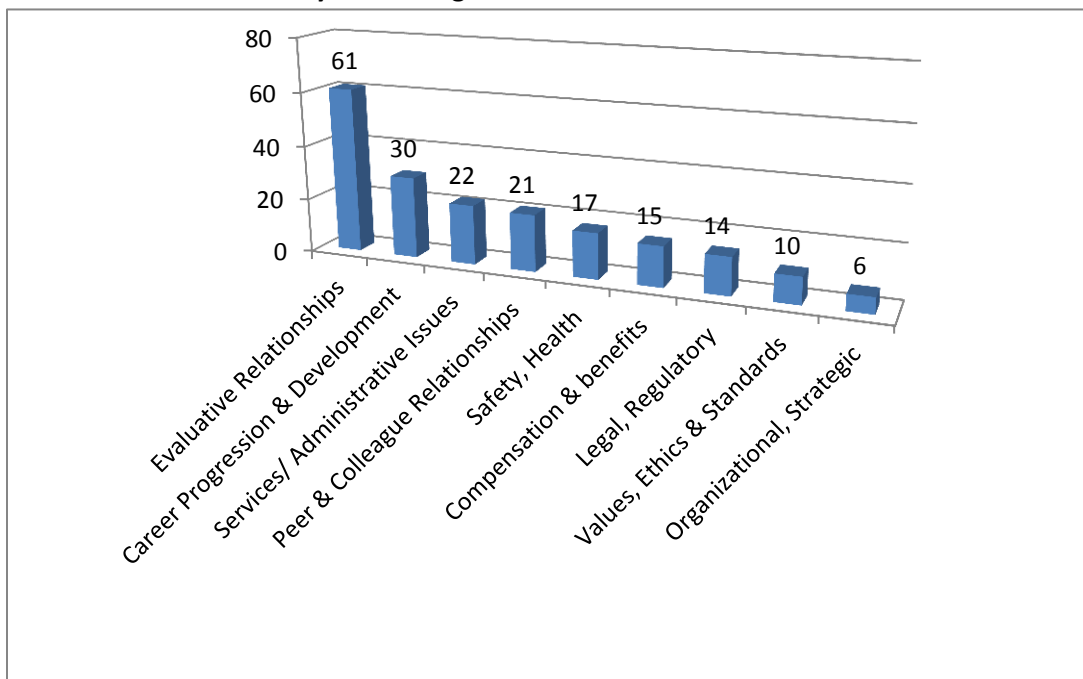
During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Office of Ombuds Services saw visitors representing 196 distinct cases. This number represents 2.8% of 6,941 members of the campus population. Staff represented the largest population of visitors to the Ombuds Office, 51% of the total visitors. Faculty users were the second highest category of users at a total of 27% of the overall visitors to the Office. The gender breakdown for visitors was about even with 92 men and 104 women visiting the office. Statistics on the ethnicity of each visitor is not kept as some categories may be small enough to identify and compromise confidentiality.

Chart 2: Ombuds Cases by User Status



As recommended by the UC Best Practices document (Ombuds.ucmerced.edu), the Office of Ombuds Services does not retain any case files. The only records are general statistics as are reported in this document. The issues for which visitors seek out the office are placed into categories developed by the International Ombuds Association, ([IOA Uniform Reporting Categories](#)). The following is a broad summary of the issues that visitors brought to the Office.

Chart 3: Ombuds Cases by Presenting Issue: Reasons for Contact



Evaluative Relationship: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e., supervisor-employee, student-faculty advisor). Common concerns include issues of respect, treatment, trust and integrity in the workplace. Other issues included bullying, assignments / schedules, performance appraisals and grading.

Career Progression: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security and separation.) Common situations included issues involving job applications / selection and recruitment processes, job classifications as well tenure and career progression.

Services / Administrative Issues: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about services or administrative offices. Common examples included academic or administrative decisions and interpretations, quality of services and responsiveness/ timeliness of response.

Peer and Colleague Relationships: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have an evaluative relationship (e.g., between staff, faculty or student-to-student). The most frequent examples included issues of respect and treatment of peers and colleagues, including some bullying, and conflicting priorities, values and beliefs.

Safety, Health, and Physical Environment: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about safety, health and infrastructure-related issues. Common concerns included physical working conditions, work related stress and work-life balance.

Compensation & Benefits: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs. Examples include issues relating to salary, job classifications and medical benefits.

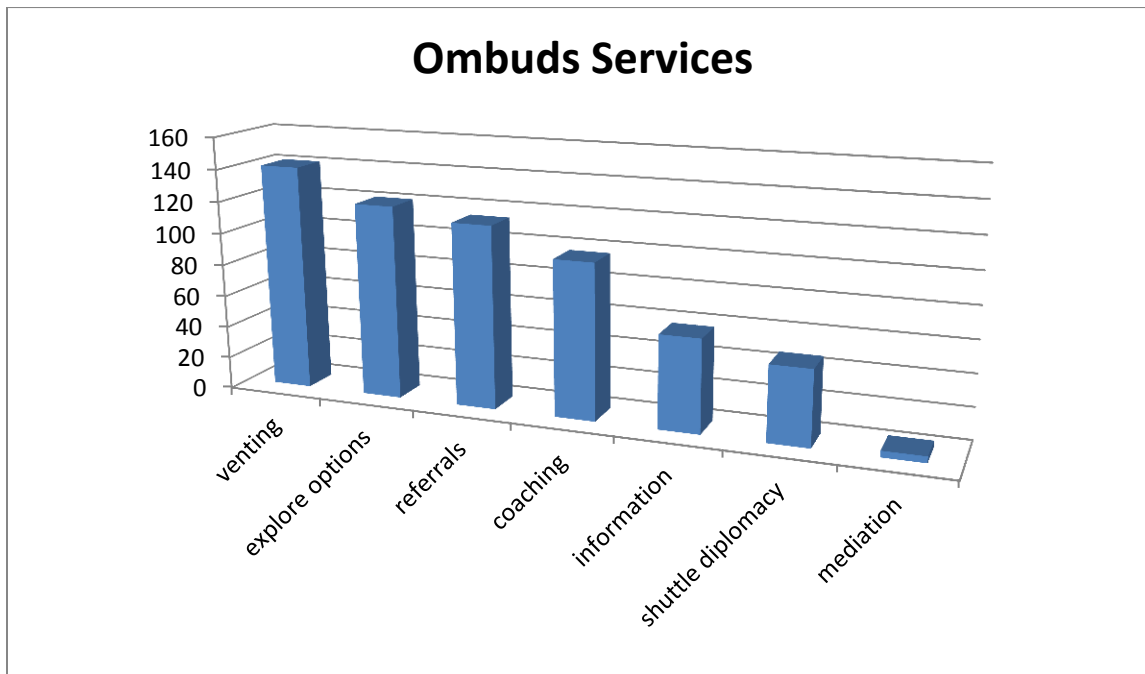
Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to harassment and business and financial practices.

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. Concerns included standards of conduct and policy, procedures and practices.

Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that are related to the whole or some part of an organization, including restructuring and relocations.

OMBUDS RESOURCES PROVIDED

The Campus Ombuds works to offer a safe place for visitors by adhering to the IOA standards and providing a calm environment when they visit. We work diligently to support the problem-solving and conflict resolution capacities of individual visitors and the broader campus community. The Ombuds works with visitors to explore options and develop their own coping and conflict resolution strategies. Over the past year, 196¹ cases were brought to the Office as a safe place to vent concerns. The Ombuds helped 121 visitors to identify and explore their options to address their concerns and 114 were provided with referrals. 97 people received coaching which includes training, skill building, feedback and goal identification. In 58 cases the Ombuds gathered additional information for the visitor and in 47 cases shuttle diplomacy or intermediary services were requested by the visitor. Out of the 196 cases, only 4 involved mediation between the parties.



¹ Often multiple resources provided to a single visitor

OUTREACH

The importance of educating and outreaching to the campus community during its first year was a top priority for the office. Opportunities to educate and inform constituents of the services and programs provided by the office increased visibility and understanding of the role and function of the office and its services. The Ombuds made 132 outreach contacts for a total of 125 hours, which included administrators, Deans, Vice Chancellors, Directors and Unit managers and staffs. Such outreach activities included:

- New Employee Orientations - monthly
- Undergraduate Student Orientation

- Graduate Student Orientation
- Graduate Student Peer Mentoring Program
- Faculty Senate introductory meeting
- Staff Assembly Executive Board Meetings – monthly or bi-monthly
- Fiat Lux Student Scholars Program
- Undergraduate Academic Counseling Staff
- Campus Town Hall meetings
- Monthly campus Lunches with the Chancellor
- Associate Students, UCM Legislative Council Meeting
- Postdoctoral Scholars Meetings and Orientation
- Office of Ombuds Services Open House
- Counseling and Psychological Services New Interns

TRAINING

The Campus Ombuds provided a variety of training on topics that have included ethical leadership, conflict resolution/management, and managerial leadership training to the campus community. The Office of Ombuds Services developed and presented 16 new trainings for approximately 30 hours to meet the various needs of units and student groups.

OFFICE LOCATION AND STAFF

The Office of Ombuds Services first location is in two adjoining offices in the Classroom and Office Building, rooms 347 & 349. Plans have been developed to move the offices in January, 2014 to a two-room suite in the Student Services Building which is currently under construction.

Deidre (De) Acker, serves as the full-time Campus Ombuds. Anthony Sali, filled the full-time position of Analyst and Intake Coordinator from January, 2013 – July, 2013. Mark Greene began as the Analyst and Intake Coordinator in September, 2013.