

UCMERCED

Office of Ombuds Services



2013-2014 Annual Report

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. The time period for this report is July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.

The Office of Ombuds Services provides the entire campus a place to talk about campus-related issues and concerns. The Campus Ombuds works to empower visitors by listening, working with visitors to identify and evaluate options, provide information and make referrals when appropriate. Services may also include facilitated conversations between two or more parties through mediation services, as well as trainings and facilitations regarding conflict management, leadership skills, accountability and team-building.

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of the Office of Ombuds Services. Therefore the publication of an annual report, while informing the campus community about the work of the Office of Ombuds Services, must also protect the visitors who have used the services throughout the year. 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 Campus Ombuds also provides informal, verbal reports to campus administrative leaders along with recommendations for change.

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

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

The services we offer are unique to the campus for the following reasons: 1) we serve the entire campus, 2) we maintain complete confidentiality, 3) the visitors decide how, when and if they will deal with the conflict and 4) we do not serve as an office of notice for the university. The Office supplements other resources on the campus, one which provides the visitors complete freedom in choosing their own paths in dealing with their conflict.

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 University was signed by Chancellor Leland. 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 exercises autonomy regarding its responsibilities. The Campus Ombuds reports to the Chancellor's Office for administrative and budgetary purposes only, and does not report on specific cases.



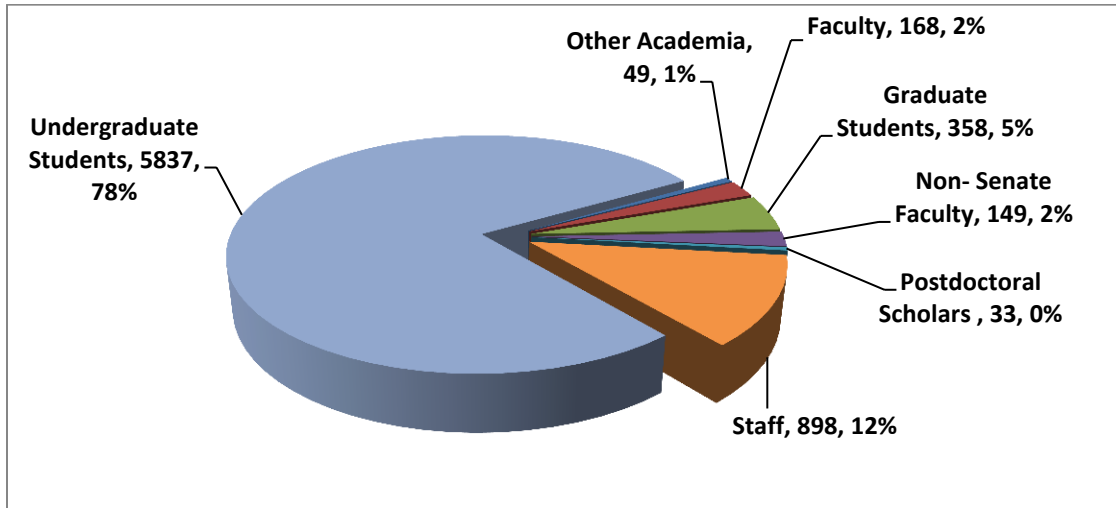
NEW THIS YEAR

- The Office of Ombuds Services moved to a new office **suite** in January 2014 in the Student Services Building (SSB), leaving the original side-by-side offices on the third floor of the Classroom and Office Building (COB.) This new suite includes a very private, interior office for the Campus Ombuds to see visitors as well as a reception area and office for the Analyst/Intake Coordinator.
- An Office of Ombuds Services brochure was created, providing detailed information about the services.
- A unique video, explaining the role of the Campus Ombuds and services was also produced this year. This video can be seen on monitors around the UC Merced campus, YouTube and on the [Office of Ombuds Services](#) website.
- Development of a 3-part Leadership training series and conducted Crucial Conversations 12-hour workshop.
- Mark Greene joined the office as the Analyst/ Intake Coordinator on September 13, 2013.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND PRESENTING ISSUES FROM OMBUDS VISITORS

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

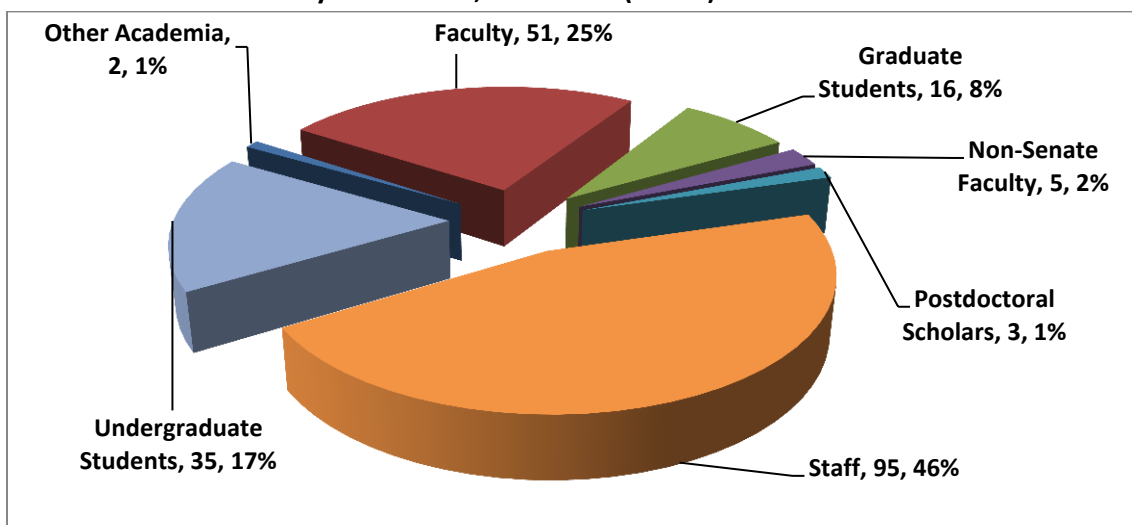
Chart 1: Campus Demographics Fall 2013 (n=7,492)



OMBUDS CASELOAD DEMOGRAPHICS

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Office of Ombuds Services saw visitors representing **207** distinct cases. This number represents 2.8% of the overall campus population (7,492). Staff was the largest percentage of visitors, 46% (95). Faculty was the second highest category of users at a total of 25% (51) of the overall visitors to the Office. Graduate Students came in at 8% (16) and Non-Senate Faculty at 2% (5). The gender breakdown of those visiting the office was 64% (132) women and 36% (75) men. Statistics on the ethnicity of each visitor is not kept as some categories may be small enough to identify individuals and compromise confidentiality.

Chart 2: Ombuds Cases by User Status, 2013-2014 (n=207)

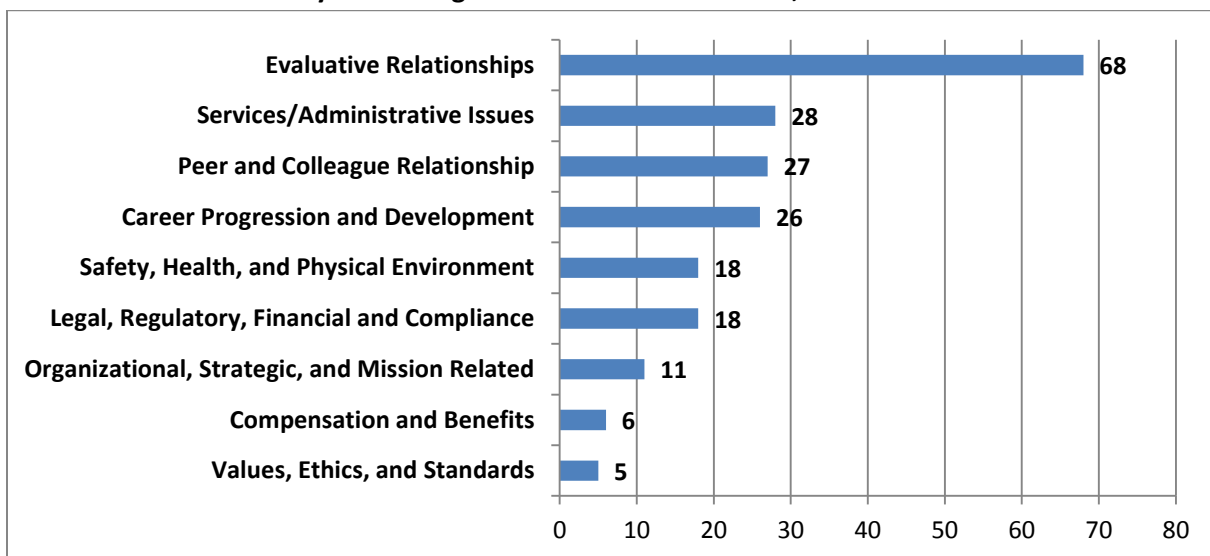




OMBUDS CASELOAD BY PRESENTING ISSUE

As recommended by the UC Best Practices document [UC Best Practices](#), 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 Ombudsman 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, 2013-2014



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 include bullying, assignments / schedules, performance appraisals and grading.

Services / Administrative Issues: Questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about services or administrative offices. Common examples include 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 include issues of respect and treatment of peers and colleagues, including some bullying, and conflicting priorities, values and beliefs.

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 include issues involving job applications / selection and recruitment processes, job classifications as well tenure and career progression.

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

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.

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.

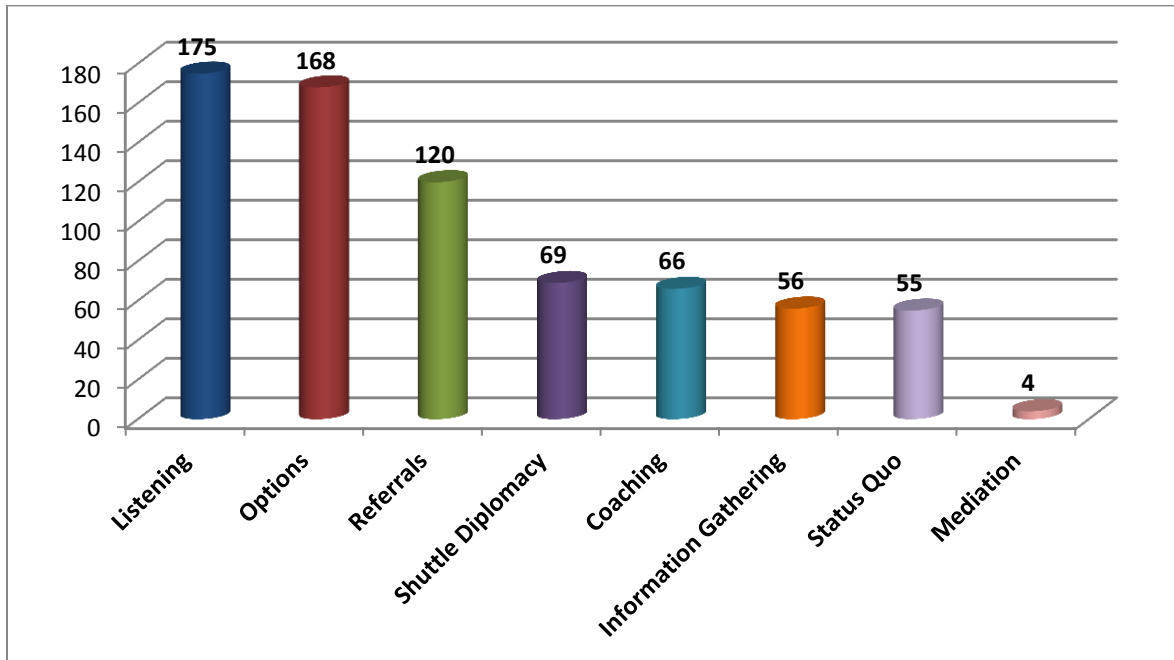
Compensation & Benefits: Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs. Examples include issues relating to salary, job classifications and medical benefits.

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 include standards of conduct and policy, procedures and practices.

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, 207 distinct cases were brought to the Office as a safe place to express concerns. The Ombuds helped 168 visitors to identify and explore their options to address their concerns and 120 were provided with referrals. In 69 cases shuttle diplomacy or intermediary services were requested by the visitor. 66 people received coaching which includes training, skill building, feedback and goal identification. In 56 cases the Ombuds gathered additional information for the visitor. Out of the 207 cases, only 4 involved mediation between the parties. Based on follow-up contact with the visitors, within a month of the initial visit, 98 cases were considered “resolved” by the visitor.

Chart 4: Ombuds Resources Provided ¹



¹ Often multiple resources provided to a single visitor

OUTREACH

The Office of Ombuds Services provides a “no barrier” service to the campus community. Thus, it is essential that the principles of the office are communicated regularly and thoroughly to the campus. “No barrier” means that ALL members may use the services as a purely voluntary and “alternate” channel for confidential communication and that members can consult with the Ombuds without fear of reprisal or retaliation. Additionally, the visitor decides what action, if any, will be taken in the situation. They keep control of that decision, unless the Ombuds perceives there to be a danger to self or others.

The Ombuds Office made 74 in-person outreach contacts for a total of 95.5 hours, which included academics, administrators, postdoctoral scholars, graduate and undergraduate students, non-senate and senate faculty and staff. The Campus Ombuds visits all of the UC Merced locations and is available to meet visitors in multiple locations, depending on the comfort level of the visitor.

Such outreach activities included:

- Academic Senate
- Annual Wellness & Safety Fair
- Ascend Conference
- Associate Students, UCM Legislative Council Meeting
- Campus Town Hall meetings
- Counseling and Psychological Services New Interns
- Fiat Lux Student Scholars Program
- Graduate Student Orientation
- Graduate Student Peer Mentoring Program
- Monthly public campus lunches with the Chancellor
- New Employee Orientations - monthly
- Office of Ombuds Services informational brochures
- Office of Ombuds Services informational video
- Postdoctoral Scholars Meetings and Orientation
- Staff Assembly Executive Board Meetings – monthly or bi-monthly
- Summer Orientations/ Resource Fair
- Undergraduate Academic Advising Staff
- Undergraduate Student Orientation

TRAINING

The Campus Ombuds provided a variety of trainings to the campus community, as well as developed a 3-part Leadership Series on topics that included: ethical leadership, conflict resolution/management, and managerial leadership training. To meet the diverse needs of units and student groups, the Campus Ombuds presented **15 trainings**, totaling approximately **44 hours** of training to **307 people**.