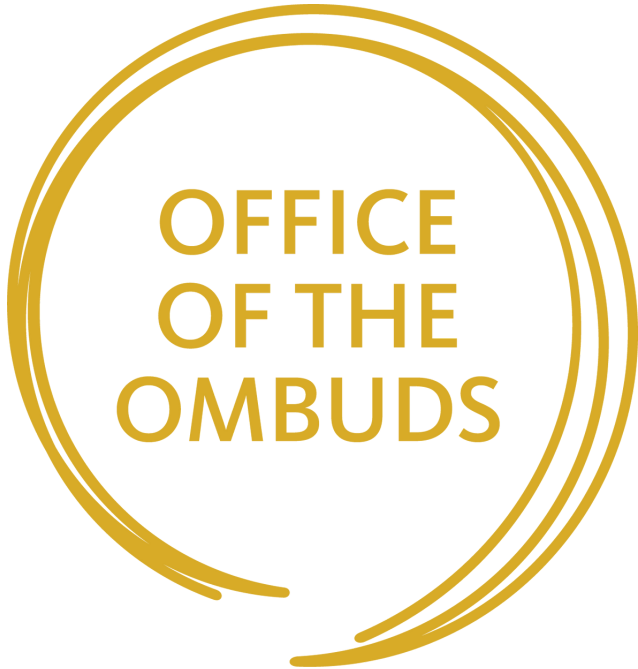




UC MERCED
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



Office of the Ombuds

The Office of the Ombuds is a voluntary, safe, confidential and informal resource where UC Merced community members can go for assistance with managing conflict, complaints, and concerns with a colleague, classmate, supervisor or anyone else on campus.

The Office of the Ombuds (OO) of UC Merced provides an annual report based on data collected over the course of the fiscal year. This data consists of visitor's primary affiliation, visitor type, and high-level demographics, including gender, age, and ethnicity. The report highlights types of problems UC Merced faculty, staff and students are dealing with over the course of the year and how the OO helps people handle them. The OO also examines this data to identify patterns and trends occurring within the UC Merced community. These trends are reported to leadership as deemed necessary by the Office of the Ombuds.

It is important to note that the OO at UC Merced is a confidential, informal, independent, and impartial conflict resolution resource for the UC Merced community; thus, the OO does not retain identifiable records on any of the visitors coming to the office. All identifying records are routinely destroyed by the OO. The OO only tracks information to identify trends and patterns at UC Merced.

Ethical Principles

The Office of the Ombuds adheres to the International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice, which are Confidentiality, Independence, Informality, and Impartiality. The Office of the Ombuds also abides by the UC Merced [Mission](#), [Diversity Statement](#) and the UC Merced [Principles of Community](#).

Executive Summary

Between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022, the Office of the Ombuds of UC Merced handled 182 individual cases. This was a 1.7% increase from the prior year. 44% of all visitors were "Staff," 43% were "Students," 12% were "Faculty" and 2% were "Other" constituents, such as parents and vendors.

It is interesting to note that 34% of our visitors preferred to meet over video conferencing, 25% preferred to meet in-person, 32% had no preference, and 9% preferred to meet by phone.

The Office of the Ombuds tracked nine high-level categories and 22 sub-categories. The top three high-level concerns were "Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related", "Career Progression and Development", and "Evaluative Relationships".

Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	11%
Career Progression and Development	14%
Evaluative Relationships	31%

The top three sub-category concerns raised by visitors were “Quality of Services”, “Administrative Decisions” and “Work Related Stress and Worklife Balance”.

Quality of Services	9%
Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules	10%
Work Related Stress and WorkLife Balance	11%

The most common services provided by the OO were “Providing a Safe Space”, “Conflict/Dispute Resolution” and “Providing Information” to the visitor. The most common actions taken by the OO were “Listening”, “Consultation/Problem Solving” and “Coaching.”

Data Collection Methodology

The Office of the Ombuds collected data by using a volunteer disclosure form which captured high-level demographics, union affiliation, location of employment, length of concern, department or school, plans if a concern is not resolved, and who the visitor talked to before coming to the OO. This form was used for all visitors. Visitors were told that they had the option of not answering any questions they did not feel comfortable answering.

The OO also captured data during the visit to determine what type of issue the visitor was dealing with. The OO categorized visitor issues into nine categories, as recommended by the International Ombuds Association as shown in the Issue Categories section of this report.

Each visitor was also sent a voluntary, anonymous survey form to better assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the OO. The results were captured on the OO [website](#) and retrieved by the Ombuds by accessing the survey results as the administrator of the website.

Services

As mentioned earlier, the most common services provided by the Office of the Ombuds were “Conflict/Dispute Resolution”, “Providing a Safe Space”, and “Providing Information”.

The Office of the Ombuds also conducted several trainings, 14 Tailored Outreach events, 12 OO & Partner collaborative trainings, and 9 mediations/group facilitations, making contact with over 1000 students and UC Merced employees over the course of the year. To maintain confidentiality, names of individuals and departments are excluded from this report.

The OO also tracked Ombuds actions once the visit was complete. The top three actions were “Consultation/Problem Solving” at 25%, “Listening” at 24%, and “Coaching” at 18%.

Informal Investigation	1%
Referral to Outside Resource	1%
Unable to Proceed - Formal Process	1%
Inquiry on Behalf	3%
Referral to Resource	9%
Upward Feedback	9%
Discuss applicable Policies/Processes	10%
Coaching	18%
Listening	24%
Consultation/Problem Solving	25%

Issue Categories

The UC Merced OO tracked nine broad categories of issues and concerns. The chart below breaks down by percentage (%) what types of issues all constituents brought to the OO.

“Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related” was the third most common category at 11%. issues include leadership and management, communication, and organizational climate as impacted by organizational strategic decisions made by senior leadership

The second highest concern was “Career Progression and Development at 14%. These types of issues include complaints about job applications and selection, tenure, career progression, a lack of career growth, and professional development opportunities.

“Evaluative Relationships” was the most common category at 31%. These types of issues include problems an employee or student was having with someone they report to.

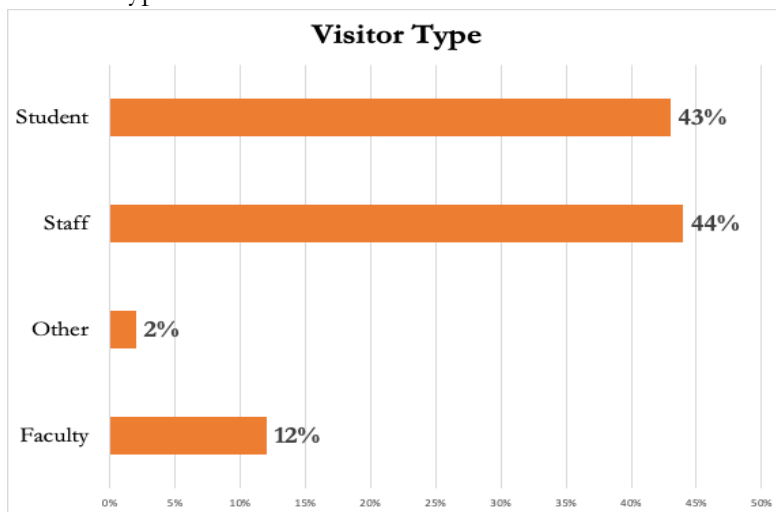
Compensation & Benefits	2%
Services/Administrative Issues	6%
Values, Ethics, and Standards	7%
Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	9%
Safety, Health, and Physical Environment	10%
Peer and Colleague Relationships	11%
Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	11%
Career Progression and Development	14%
Evaluative Relationships	31%

Visitors

The UC Merced Office of the Ombuds tracked types of visitors by role, gender identity, and ethnicity to better understand who is and isn't utilizing the OO services. The following is a breakdown of visitors coming to the OO.

Visitor Type by Role

The UC Merced Office of the Ombuds serves all faculty, staff and students. Of the 182 visitors the OO had this year, 44% were "Staff", 43% were "Students", 12% were "Faculty", and 2% were "Other" types of constituents.

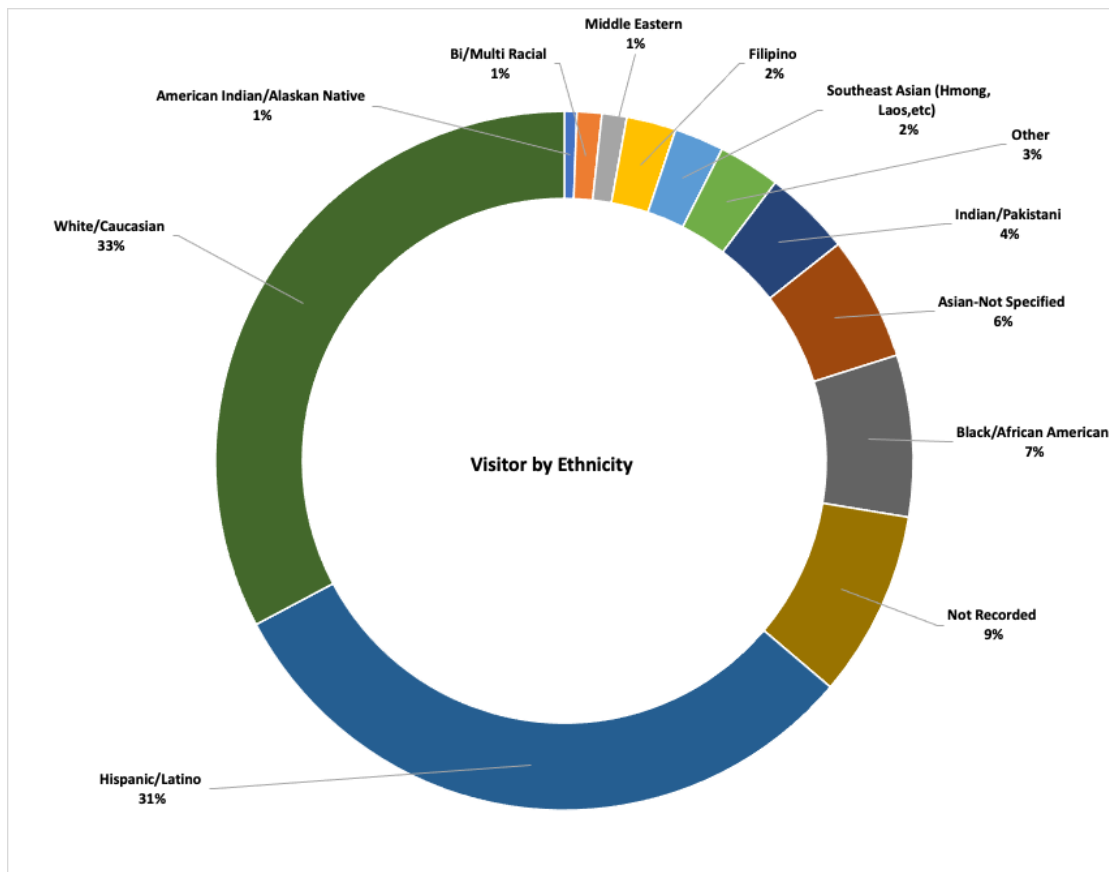


Other	2%
Faculty	12%
Student	43%
Staff	44%

Visitor Type by Ethnicity

The top three (self-reported) ethnicities to visit the Office of the Ombuds were “White/Caucasian” at 33%, “Hispanics/Latino” at 31% and “Black/African American” at 7%.

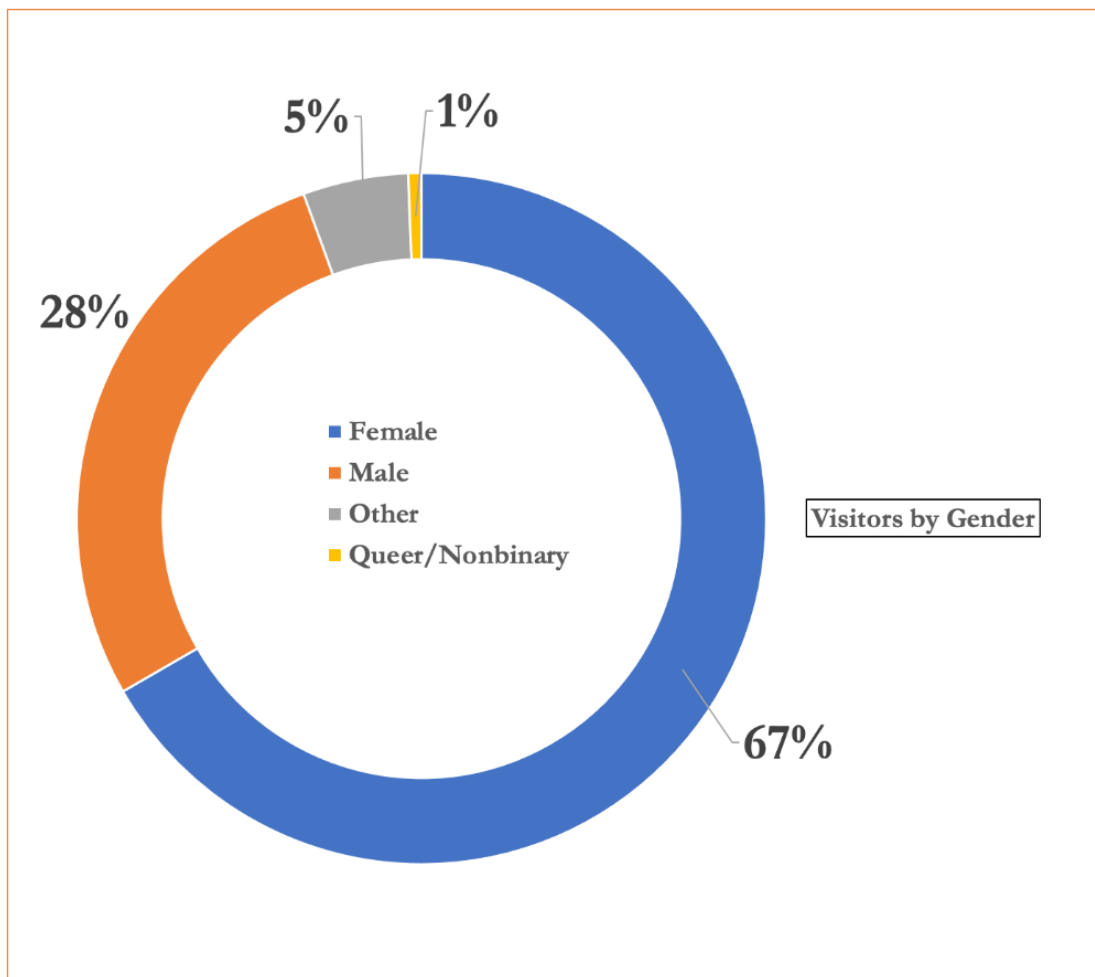
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%
Bi/Multi Racial	1%
Middle Eastern	1%
Filipino	2%
Southeast Asian (Hmong, Laos,etc)	2%
Other	3%
Indian/Pakistani	4%
Asian-Not Specified	6%
Black/African American	7%
Not Recorded	9%
Hispanic/Latino	31%
White/Caucasian	33%



Visitors Type by Gender Identity

Of all the visitors to the Office of the Ombuds, 67% identified as “Female”, 28% as “Male”, 1% as “Queer/Nonbinary”, and 5% as another identity.

Female	67%
Male	28%
Other	5%
Queer/Nonbinary	1%



Top Concerns by Constituents

Faculty

Faculty's top three concerns were "Values, Ethics, and Standards" at 11%, "Peer and Colleague Relationships" at 21%, and "Evaluative Relationships" at 25%.

Compensation & Benefits	4%
Services/Administrative Issues	5%
Safety, Health, and Physical Environment	7%
Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	9%
Career Progression and Development	9%
Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	11%
Values, Ethics, and Standards	11%
Peer and Colleague Relationships	21%
Evaluative Relationships	25%

Staff

Staff's top three concerns were "Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related" at 15%, "Career Progression" at 18%, and "Evaluative Relationships" at 34%.

Compensation & Benefits	2%
Services/Administrative Issues	2%
Values, Ethics, and Standards	3%
Peer and Colleague Relationships	8%
Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	8%
Safety, Health, and Physical Environment	10%
Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	15%
Career Progression and Development	18%
Evaluative Relationships	34%

Students

Students' top three concerns were "Peer and Colleague Relationships", "Safety, Health, and Physical Environment" "Services/Administration Issues", all at 11%, "Career Progression and Development" at 12%, and "Evaluative Relationships" at 31%.

Compensation & Benefits	2%
Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	6%
Values, Ethics, and Standards	7%
Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	9%
Peer and Colleague Relationships	11%
Safety, Health, and Physical Environment	11%
Services/Administrative Issues	11%
Career Progression and Development	12%
Evaluative Relationships	31%

Retention

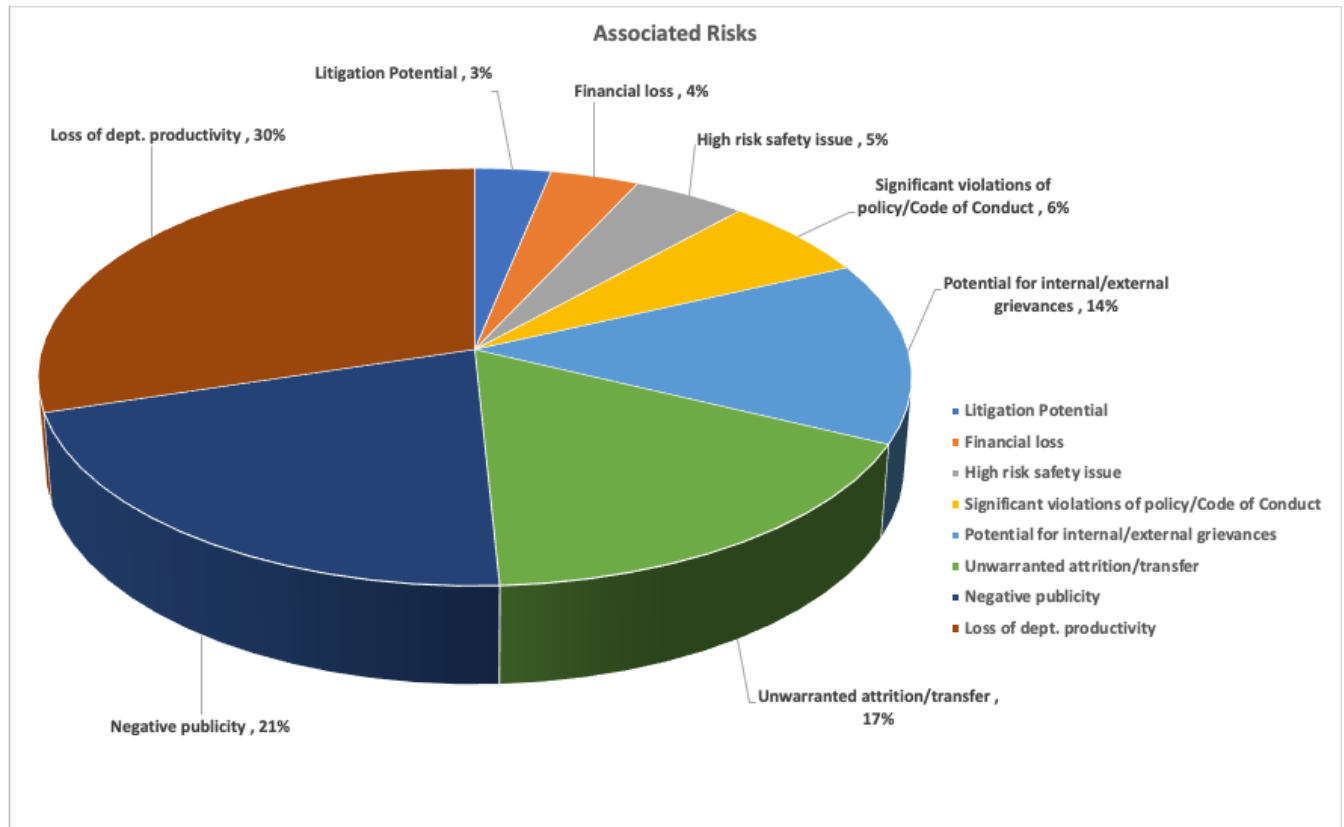
The Ombuds Office also tracked whether or not a visitor was planning to leave their position if their concerns were not resolved. 12% stated they would leave the University, and 28% were undecided. The potential loss of UCM employees is 40%. It is also important to note that almost half of our visitors were not planning on separating from UC Merced.

Yes, leave my department	11%
Yes, separate from UCM	12%
Undecided	28%
No	49%

Perceived Risk to UC Merced

The OO also captured what visitors perceived to be the risk to the campus. “Loss of Department Productivity” was the highest concern at 30%, “Negative Publicity” was at 21% and “Unwarranted attrition/transfer” was at 17%. It is significant to note that the combination of “Litigation Potential” and “Potential for Internal/External Grievances” combined is 17%. This may indicate that there is a high risk of litigation to the University. “Negative Publicity” ties into multiple categories, as well.

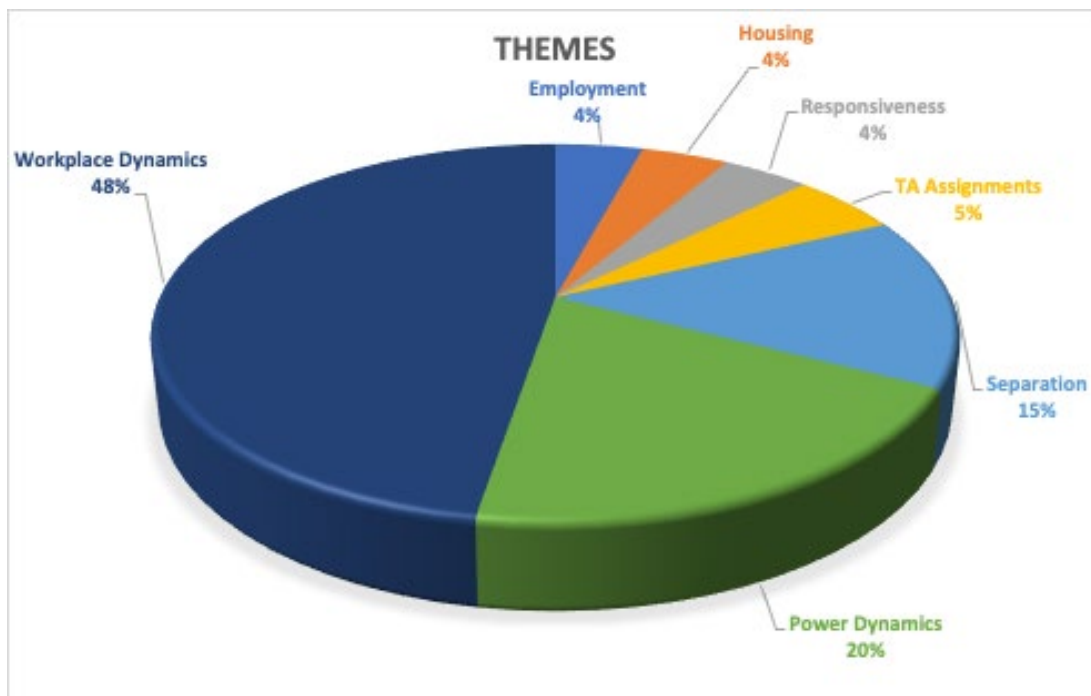
Litigation Potential	3%
Financial Loss	4%
High Risk Safety Issue	5%
Significant Violations of Policy/Code of Conduct	6%
Potential for Internal/External Grievance	14%
Unwarranted Attrition/Transfer	17%
Negative Publicity	21%
Loss of Dept. Productivity	30%



Themes

The following chart and graph show the major "Themes" that the Office of the Ombuds captured. Themes are reoccurring issues reported by multiple constituents. They can occur within specific areas or across the entire campus:

Employment	4%
Housing	4%
Responsiveness	4%
TA Assignments	5%
Separation	15%
Power Dynamics	20%
Workplace Dynamics	48%



Recommendations

Strengthen Employee Recognition Efforts and Initiatives

Retention of talented employees is pivotal to the success of UC Merced. Without motivated, talented and skilled employees, reaching strategic goals will be difficult. Morale is low in some spaces. To address these issues, UC Merced could evaluate its current Employee Recognition efforts and determine if there are areas of improvement, and if there are creative ways to incentivize new and seasoned employees to stay at UC Merced. Secondly, an examination of who is leaving and why would help identify the root issue. Data could be collected from Exit Interviews and data captured by Institutional Research.

Evaluative Relationships Concerns

The top concern for all constituents was “Evaluative Relationships.” While we understand that evaluative relationships differ between faculty, staff and students, the construct of power dynamics is the same for all relationships when there is a difference in power between individuals.

The “trend” described above is also captured in data regarding Themes: “Workplace Dynamics” was at 48% and “Power Dynamics” was at 20%. This data consistently indicates that supervisors and people with power are often at the center of conflict. To address this trend, structured, mandatory new manager training would benefit new supervisors who begin a career at UC Merced managing others. Furthermore, people in supervisory positions would be well served by attending Conflict Coaching, Listening, Empathy, and other conflict resolution and effective workplace communication trainings. This endeavor could develop from a partnership with the Office of the Ombuds and HR.

Support for Departments and Offices with multiple unfilled positions

A department with multiple vacancies can experience increased stress, a decreased work-life balance, and reduced productivity. A number of visitors reported that vacancies contributed to the impact of their concerns.

Addressing concerns that relate to vacancies and turnover would likely increase morale and decrease the stress on existing employees, which in turn could increase retention. Measures that may help are creating a process for rapidly assigning personnel with needed functional skills (e.g., a temporary employee pool) to departments with key vacancies, as well as decreasing the time needed to fill vacancies in departments whose missions are most affected by those vacancies.