



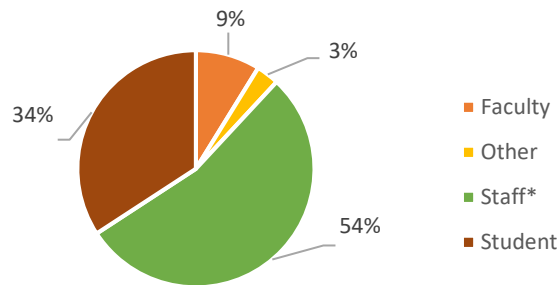
Connecting People

The Office of the Ombuds offers a safe, brave and confidential space for the unique and diverse members of the campus community who have concerns or issues arising from or affecting their work and studies at UC Merced.

Our office supports a culture of universal respect, civility and ethical standards. We serve as a conflict management resource and promote connection and engagement for mutual or individual understanding of differences in personality and perspective.

The response of the Ombudsperson is tailored to the dynamics of the situation and the visitor’s concerns that includes active listening, coaching, resources/referrals, problem solving, empowerment, group facilitation and mediation poised in respect, equity and fairness.

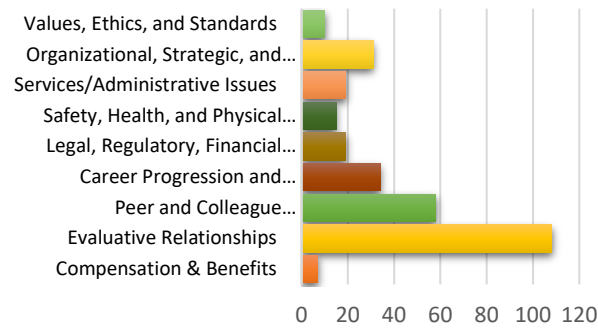
Ombuds New Cases N=194



*Post Doc’s are included in Staff for fiscal year

Office of the Ombuds defines cases as an intake where a “visitor” meets with an Ombuds to receive confidential and informal services.

Total Visits N= 301 Main Concerns



Evaluative relationships accounted for 36% of main concerns reported by visitors. These types of relationships consist of conflict arising from supervisor-employee or faculty-student. Visitors, especially those who view their position as having little power in a situation, expressed poor communication, lack of supervisory effectiveness and unfair performance appraisal/grading.

Visitors with the status of supervisor often sought consultation with Ombuds to address concerns of subordinate employees, in addition to services related to respect/treatment and equity of treatment. Although a visitor is classified as a supervisor the problem can be related to conflict with their own manager or administration. Evaluative relationship issues have the added element of unequal power dynamics of the persons involved.

- Results from the online feedback surveys showed:
- 100% strongly agree they were treated with respect
 - 96% strongly agree Ombuds helped identify options
 - 91% strongly agree they were satisfied w/ their experience

Our Guiding Principles

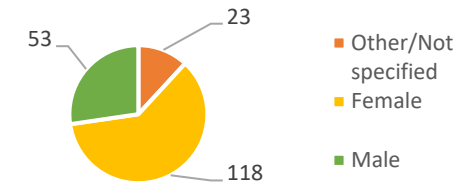
Confidential- The Ombudsperson holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and takes all reasonable steps to safeguard confidentiality. The only exception is in rare cases of imminent risk of harm to self or to others.

Neutral/Impartial- We are neutral, impartial and unaligned in the handling of conflict or disputes. We advocate for fair process and have no personal stake in the outcome of a situation.

Informal- Our office will assist in handling a conflict at informal levels. We can refer visitors to formal grievance resources, but do not participate in any formal process. Use of our office is always voluntary.

Independent- We are autonomous from other university entities or authorities.

Cases by Gender N=194



Visitors are allowed to self-identify their gender. The question is formatted as a write-in space to fill in their own response. Some visitors do not answer, or some visitors go unidentified (e.g. phone appointments).

“It felt nice to just talk about the problem out loud to the Ombudsperson. That she validated and sympathized with my concerns was as important as offering potential solutions.”- Anonymous Visitor



Visitor Sub-Issues

Top Undergraduate Sub-Issues
• Performance Appraisal/Grading
• Values/Beliefs (Peer)
• Discipline

Top Staff Sub-Issues
• Supervisory Effectiveness
• Peer- Respect/Treatment
• Departmental Climate

Top Graduate Sub-Issues
• Communication (peer/evaluative)
• Supervisory Effectiveness
• Respect/Treatment (peer)

Top Faculty Sub-Issues
• Performance Appraisal- Evaluative
• Bullying/Respect/Treatment- Peer
• Respect/Treatment- Evaluative

University Feedback

A key role of the Ombuds Office is to provide feedback to the University when patterns/trends indicate potential systemic concerns. Nearly 30% of cases resulted in some form of feedback to campus leadership. Although Ombuds will provide upward feedback, we do so without sharing a visitor’s personal story, commentary and diligently report in an anonymized way in order to protect the confidentiality of our visitors and the integrity of the Ombuds office.

Training Increase

We expanded our trainings by 73% from the previous year. Specifically, in response to the newly implemented policy on Prohibition of Abusive Conduct and Acts of Violence policy, the Ombuds Office led the creation of the “Creating a Respectful Workplace: A No Bully Campus” training and collaborated with Employee and Labor Relations and Campus Climate. The training included education and understanding of the policy, the roles and responsibilities of staff and faculty in these situations, and the negative impacts abrasive behavior can have on employees and students well-being. The programs were tailored into two presentations, one for supervisors and one for non-managerial career staff/faculty.

This upcoming academic year, we plan to increase the frequency of availability for the trainings. In addition to this training, we introduced the first presentation of “Connect and Communicate: Understanding Cross-Cultural Communication in the Workplace”. This presentation is an elective course for the Diversity Awareness Certificate Program (DACP). Participants gained knowledge and understanding of various cross-cultural conflict resolution practices, communication styles from verbal to non-verbal, and tools to approach a variety of everyday intercultural situations. Other workshop topics included how to handle family conflict during holiday visits, connecting the principles of community to creating a culture of care on campus, and understanding conflict resolution styles. Our office also trained staff on giving and receiving feedback for professional development, and co-facilitated trainings of Crucial Conversations.

Services Provided	Number	People
Individual Ombuds Consultations (new Cases)	194	194
Mediation & Group Facilitations	9	27
Trainings	19	787
Outreach: Events & Presentations	28	829
Total Individuals Reached	=	1,835

In FY 2018-19 our trainings increased by 73%, our outreach increased by 12% and total persons contacted increased by 31% since 2017-18. Number of new cases is comparable to previous years.

Emerging Concerns:

Visitors continue to report fear of retaliation, especially when power differential is inherent in the relationship, as the number one impediment to reporting despite instances of severe violations.

Visitors report increased concerns balancing well-being and their mental health issues.

Increase in complexity between graduate and faculty advisor relationship included authorship, confidential disclosures, harassment and academic progress.

Student visitors stated lack of guidance and understanding related to employment policies procedures and conflict resolution resources.

An increase of staff leaving due to issues and concerns related to their unit/department.

Various visitor populations report concern about their safety (psychological and physical) especially in research fields and lab settings.

“I appreciate the Ombuds was thoughtful. It's going to take some thought and creativity to solve my (serious) problem, and I am glad she is helping me look for lasting solutions.” -Anonymous Visitor

