

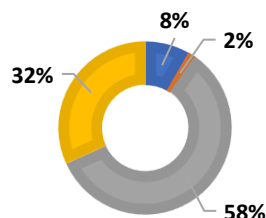
Connecting and Engaging People

Office of the Ombuds is a safe and confidential space where members of the campus community can discuss concerns or issues arising from or affecting their work and studies at UC Merced. We are an informal, off-the-record resource that advocates for fair and equitable processes and assists individuals and groups in exploring and determining their options to resolve conflicts, problematic issues, and concerns.

The Ombuds office's mission is to ensure that members of UC Merced's diverse community receive fair and equitable treatment and address concerns that stand in the way of achieving our highest potential as a community of excellence, respect, and justice. Our goals are to build a conflict intelligent community, encourage human connection through peaceful dialogue, and bring systemic concerns to the organization's attention for resolution.

Ombuds Cases (N=195)

■ Faculty ■ Other ■ Staff ■ Student

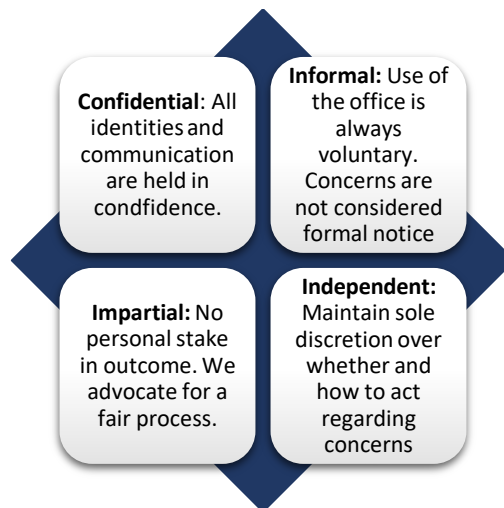


The Office of the Ombuds defines cases as an intake where a "visitor" meets with an Ombuds to receive confidential and informal services.

"I just got to talk about anything that was on my mind. She asked questions that led to more discussions, but I felt free to speak openly".
~Anonymous Visitor

Our Guiding Principles

The Office of the Ombuds operates under the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the International Ombudsman Association.

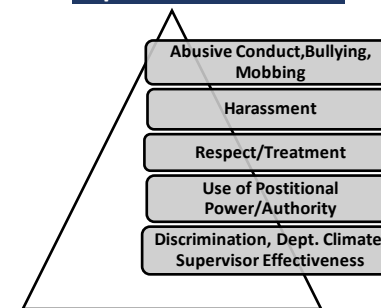


Demographics (N=195)

Visitors voluntarily self-identify their gender and ethnicity during an appointment. Over **69%** of visitors identify their gender as female, with **30%** of visitors identifying as male. Approximately **23%** of visitors identify as Hispanic/Latino and **23%** of visitors identify as White/Caucasian.



Top 5 Visitor Concerns



Faculty	Staff	Student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment • Supervisory Concerns • Discrimination • Work-Related Stress/Work Life-Balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Respect/Treatment • Leadership & Management • Use of Positional Power/Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Harassment • Use of Positional Power/Authority • Respect/Treatment

The Office of the Ombuds tracks visitor concerns using an adapted version of the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories.

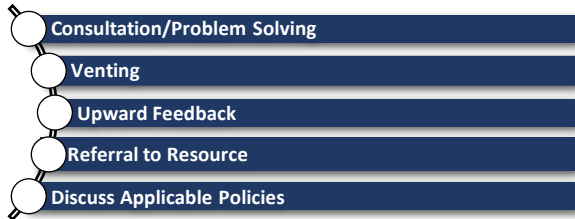
The Ombuds Office provides opportunities for visitors to provide satisfaction feedback:

- **75%** said they were aware of their options to address their concern.
- **47%** expressed they had a new perspective of the situation including developed skill or learning approaches to resolve current and future problems.
- **72%** of cases were informally managed.
- **99%** said they were treated respectfully, and strongly agree they would recommend others to our office.

Case Complexity

36% of cases required more people involved, with multiple issues and increasingly serious consequences, while **61%** of cases were mostly interpersonal conflicts involving fewer than 4 people.

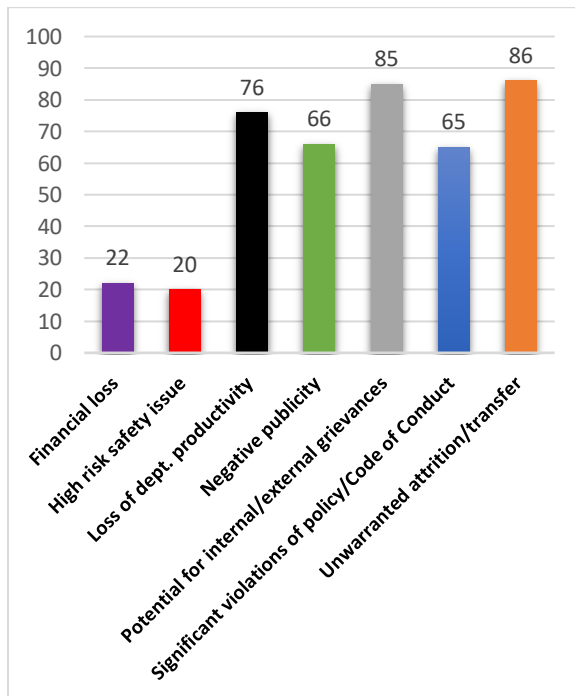
Top Ombuds Actions



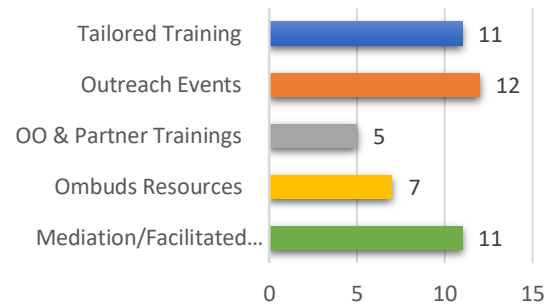
A key role of the Office of the Ombuds is to provide upward feedback to leadership within the University when trends received in the office indicate a potential for systemic concerns and/or associated risk. Approximately **43%** of cases resulted in some form of upward feedback to leadership.

Associated Risks

The Office of the Ombuds identifies key risks expressed by visitors. When unresolved, conflict creates both risk and cost to the University.



Outreach/Trainings



In FY 2019-20, our mediations and group facilitations increased by **22%**.

Concerns & Systemic Recommendations

Consistent with last year's annual report, top case concerns continue to revolve around forms of abusive conduct/bullying and harassment. Lack of respectful treatment is an underlying theme by all visitors that include experiences of not being heard, rudeness, and disregard for people in general. Visitors share their fear of retaliation for speaking up, feel unsafe, and lack confidence in the structured processes. These concerns reflect outcomes in the system-wide and staff engagement survey where UC Merced results are among the lowest compared to other campuses. Visitors also expressed concern for the overall organizational climate, particularly the use of positional power and authority, resulting in adverse impact and morale in the unit.

Observations and interpretations of visitor cases and recommendations:

Accountability: Concerns focused on patterns of misbehavior that continue to go unaddressed, lack of corrective action, and perception of leadership's unwillingness to manage, accept, and improve the climate is a recurring theme. Develop strategies for review of structured processes, results, and outcomes to effectively address conduct and behaviors.

Leadership Development: Advance developing programs on essential leadership skills, especially in conflict management, unconscious bias, and psychological safety skills. Implementation of 360 reviews to provide constructive, meaningful improvement. To establish new norms includes the development of new skills. Leaders can model the way to support a culture of respect and trust.

Communication and Transparency: Institute norms for consistent communication for employees in respective units on organizational vision, structure, and opportunity to promote all-inclusive engagement and feedback.

Well-Being: Access to counselors, therapists continue to be an area of concern. Creative solutions could include outreach to programs seeking field experience for their students and telemed/psych to professionals outside the service area.

Diversity: Encourage organizational and interactional diversity on campus initiatives across employee levels. Examine data and action for exclusive hiring and retention cases. Continue and further improve supportive racial structure, understanding diversity, programs, and initiatives.

In this time of uncertainties, polarization, and social unrest, visitors share concerns about *job security, safety and health, teaching and program delivery, diversity, increased care responsibilities, and balancing priorities between work and family obligations* impacting mental and physical well-being. Continued communication and support are essential during the pandemic. Reinforcement of "maximum flexibility" to reassure employees of our commitment to getting through the challenges together, stronger, and caring is critical.

The Ombuds' priority will continue to focus on individual visitors' needs, assess data to deepen our understanding of issues/concerns, and support campus initiatives to promote, enhance, and actualize our Principles of Community, primarily through peaceful connection, equity, fairness, and justice.