

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Emory University Office of the Ombudsperson

Lynell Cadray, University Ombuds Officer  
[ombuds@emory.edu](mailto:ombuds@emory.edu)



EMORY  
UNIVERSITY

Office of the  
University Ombuds



# Table of Contents

---

<b>Letter from the Ombudsperson .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Data Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Faculty .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Staff .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Students.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Appendix A: Operations and Data Management .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Appendix B: Methods .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix C: IOC Uniform Reporting Categories.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Appendix D: Planning and Executing a Difficult Conversation.....</b>	<b>23</b>





# Table of Figures

---

Fig. 1: Visits by Month.....	3
Fig. 2: COVID-19 Related Visits.....	3
Fig. 3: Top Uniform Reporting Category (URC) Concerns .....	4
Fig. 4: Top URC Sub-Categories .....	4
Fig. 5: Visits by School.....	5
Fig. 6: Top Departments.....	5
Fig. 7: URC Concerns by School.....	5
Fig. 8: Visitors by Emory Profile.....	6
Fig. 9: Profile by School/Organization.....	6
Fig. 10: URC Concerns by Profile .....	6
Fig. 11: Visitors by Race .....	7
Fig. 12: Race by School .....	7
Fig. 13: Concerns by Race .....	7
Fig. 14: Visitors by Gender.....	8
Fig. 15: Gender by School/Organization .....	8
Fig. 16: Concerns by Gender.....	8
Fig. 17: Faculty by Race.....	9
Fig. 18: Faculty by Gender .....	9
Fig. 19: Faculty by School .....	9
Fig. 20: Top Faculty Concerns.....	9
Fig. 21: Peer Relationships (Faculty).....	10
Fig. 22: Evaluative Relationships (Faculty).....	10
Fig. 23: Organizational Concerns (Faculty) .....	10
Fig. 24: Staff by Race .....	11
Fig. 25: Staff by Gender.....	11
Fig. 26: Staff by Age .....	11
Fig. 27: Top Staff Concerns .....	11
Fig. 28: Evaluative Relationships (Staff) .....	12
Fig. 29: Career Progression (Staff).....	12
Fig. 30: Legal and Compliance (Staff) .....	12
Fig. 31: Students by Race .....	13
Fig. 32: Students by Gender.....	13
Fig. 33: Students by School.....	13
Fig. 34: Top Student Concerns .....	13
Fig. 35: Evaluative Relationships (Students) .....	14
Fig. 36: Values (Students).....	14
Fig. 37: Compliance (Students) .....	14



# Letter from the Ombudsperson

---

Dear President Fenves,

The *Emory Office of the University Ombudsperson* was established and opened just one year ago. At that time, we had no idea that within two months, we would pack up and transition to remote communication with our constituents. As the term “Ombuds” is somewhat unfamiliar at Emory, I was concerned and uncertain how we could remotely build a support resource with which the community could still effectively engage during a pandemic. Reflecting on our initial year of positive conflict resolution work, I can confidently say that we have effectively connected with the Emory community. The support shown by colleagues from various levels of the organization has strengthened my belief that the office is moving in the right direction in helping to create a more meaningful learning, teaching, living and working environment at Emory. I am pleased to conclude the first year by presenting this report of our activities.

The overall number of visits, 351 from Jan. 6, 2020 through Jan. 6, 2021 is on target with our initial projections of first year activity. In addition, we had several outreach touchpoints that were as meaningful as individual visits to the university community. In our first year, we published (5) five newsletters with an average readership of 732; we created a listserv with more than 2500 subscribers; we hosted a well-received webinar, “Conflict Resolution in a Socially Distanced Community” with 233 participants; we hosted two book discussions (capped at twenty five participants) on Robin DiAngelo’s “White Fragility” and Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”; and we celebrated International Ombuds Day with 32 ZOOM participants. In addition, we conducted several trainings on conflict resolution, including with Residence Life (approximately 30 participants) and the staff of the Law School (approximately 45 participants).

As we work to educate the community on addressing conflict in our working and learning environment, I am confident we are on track to increase our



engagement in the second year of operation. I expect that we will increase our visitors a minimum of 20% over the past year; that number should continue to grow as we move forward. Our philosophy is that while conflict is inevitable and ever-evolving, a university-wide strategy of increasing conflict literacy will improve outcomes, facilitate communication, and strengthen relationships across our community—a win-win for all. While mere numbers are not the main measure of success, we are encouraged by the confidence and support shown by our colleagues, from those who needed assistance as they struggled through issues and concerns, to our leadership who needed guidance on thorny issues or solutions to progressively complex situations.

Although we are a new department and this work is new to Emory, our office is steadfastly becoming an integral part of the Emory culture. We will continue to work to earn a reputation for fairness, operating at the highest levels of integrity and responsiveness.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Emory community, and for the trust and support placed in my work and the overall office. It is a privilege to serve Emory in this valuable mission.

Best Regards,

Lynell A. Cadray  
University Ombudsperson and Sr. Adviser to the President

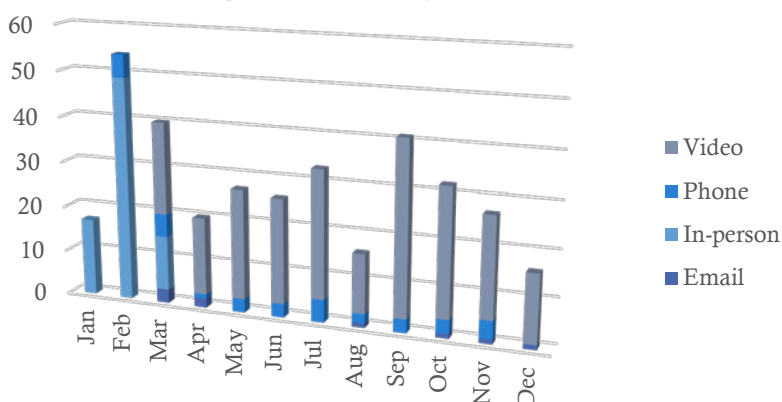
## DEBUTING IN A DIFFICULT YEAR

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and handling 77.5 percent of visits remotely, the Ombuds Office received 351 visits from 270 individual visitors.

## Data Summary

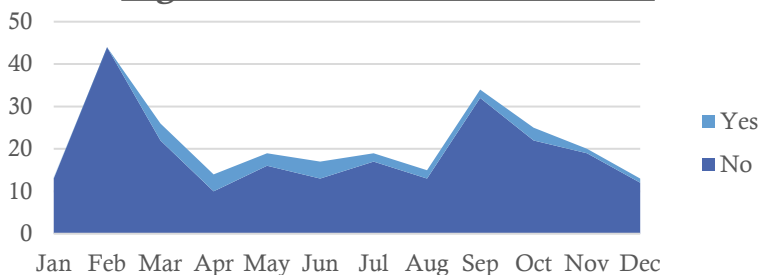
Since opening our doors officially on January 6, 2020, the Office of the Ombuds has received a total of 351 visits from 270 individual visitors. These visitors came from all levels of the University, from every school and every demographic. This section will provide a broad summary of these visits and the University-wide trends they identified.

**Fig. 1: Visits by Month**



Visits during our first year followed a pattern of peaking early in the Spring and Fall semesters and tapering at the end of each semester. Predictably, after the University's transition to remote learning in March 2020 most of these visits were remote (typically videoconference). Almost 10% of our total concerns across the remainder of the year involved Covid-19.

**Fig. 2: COVID-19 Related Visits**



Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec



EMORY  
UNIVERSITY

Office of the  
University Ombuds



Fig. 3: Uniform Reporting Category (URC) Concerns

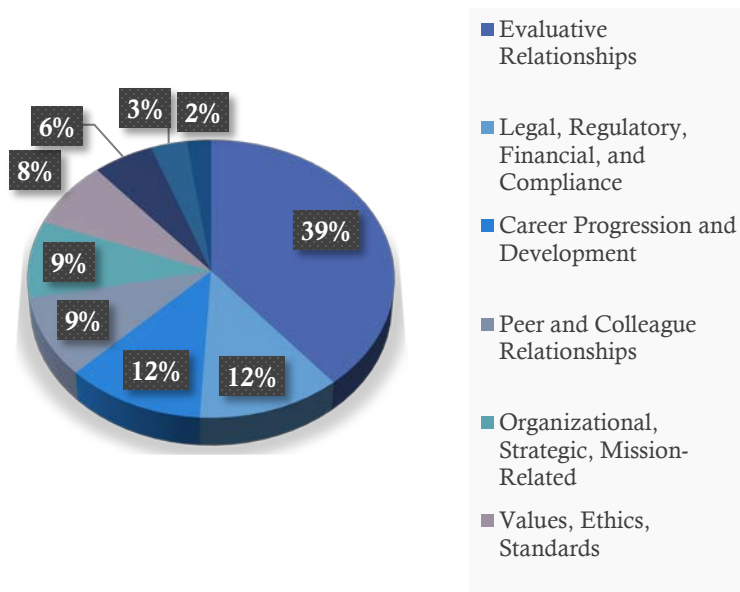
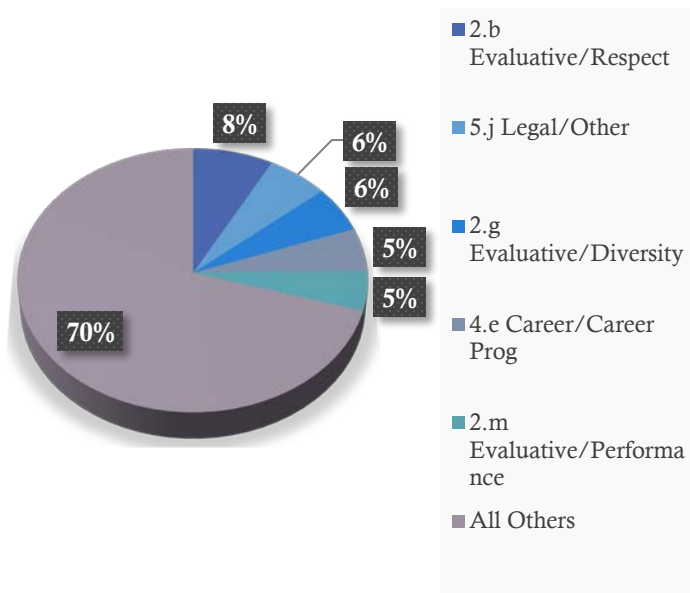


Fig. 4: Top URC Sub-Categories



## By Far, the Largest Proportion of Concerns Involved “Evaluative Relationships.”

39% of concerns across the University involved *Evaluative Relationships*—A category that includes supervisor/supervisee, teacher/student, and other hierarchical relationships. This fact belies the major role hierarchy plays in conflicts across Emory.

Evaluative Relationships were also three of the top reported Sub-Categories across the University, including the top category (Respect/Treatment) (8% of total concerns). Along with Diversity-Related (6%) and Performance Evaluation/Grading (5%) concerns, the top three Evaluative Relationship sub-categories alone constituted 19% of total concerns. These, along with the other top categories of Legal/Other (6%) and Career/Career Progression (5%), constituted 30% of total concerns.

## Over Half of Visitors Came from University Administrative Units, the School of Medicine, and Laney Graduate School—30% from 8 Departments.

While we received visitors from across the entire University community, three areas were responsible for over half (56%) of our visits: University Administrative Units, the School of Medicine, and Laney Graduate School.

At the department level, eight departments (from Administrative Units and 4 Schools) were responsible for over 30% of concerns: Chemistry (graduate and undergraduate), Dept. of Medicine, School of Medicine/Other, Campus Services, Admin/Other, GDBBS, Units reporting to the Office of the Provost, and Undergraduate Education.

“Evaluative Relationships” was reported as the top concern across all schools.

Figure 5: Visits by School

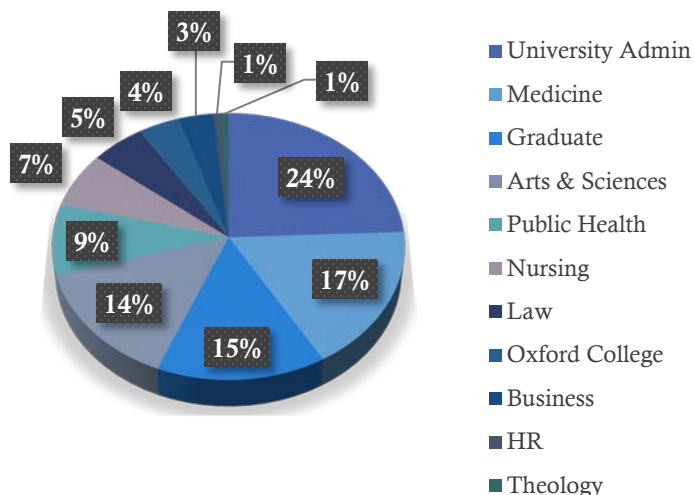


Fig. 6: Top Departments

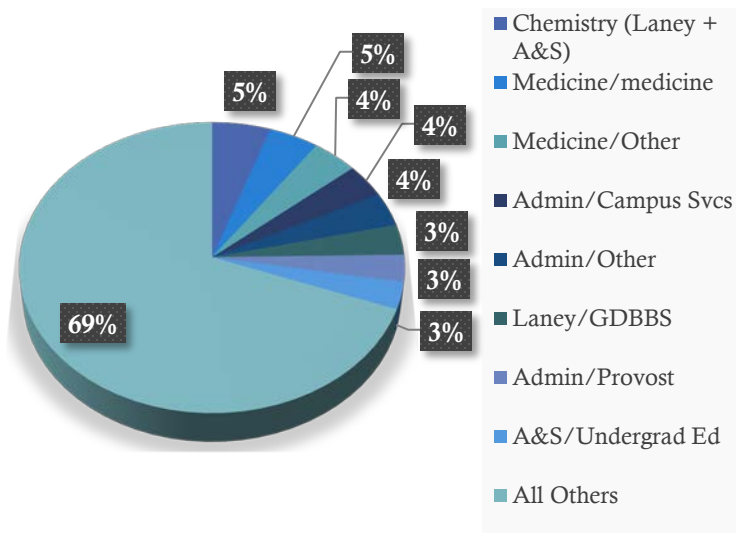
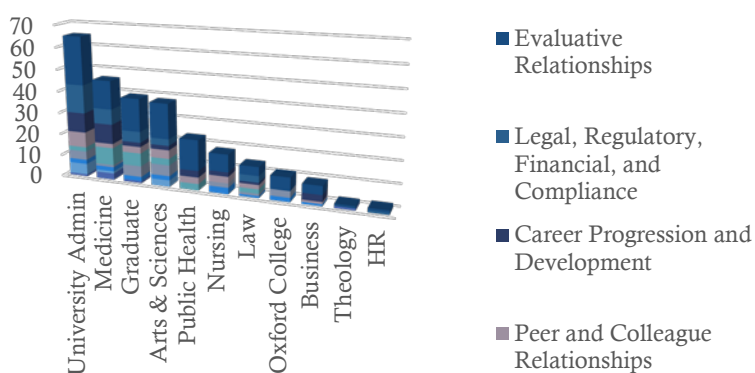
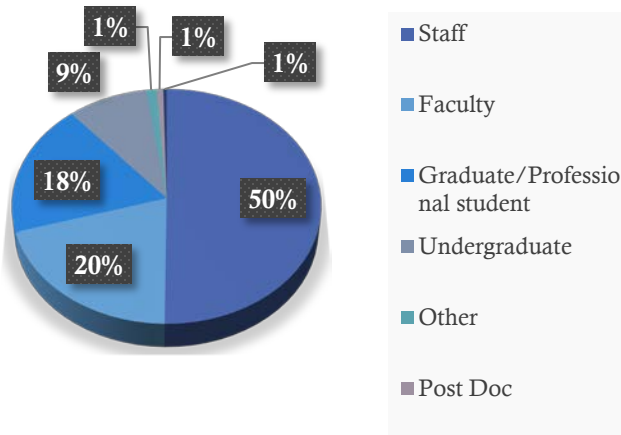


Fig. 7: Concerns by School



**Fig. 8: Visitors by Emory Profile**

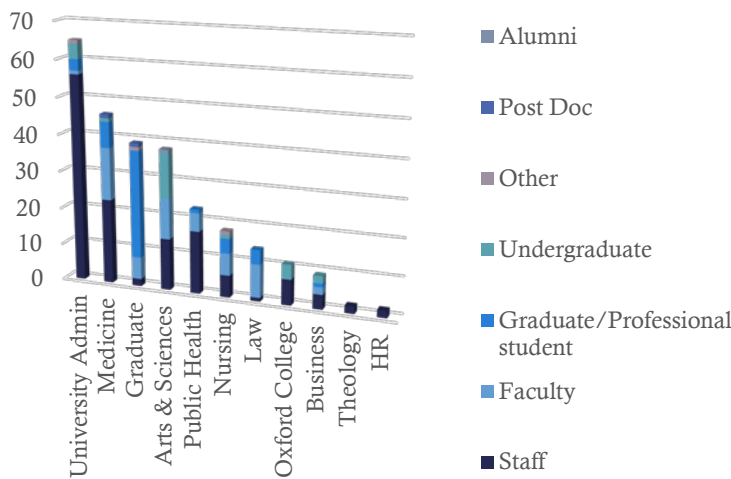


## Visits Came from Staff, Students, and Faculty—But Most Significantly from Staff.

50% of visitors were staff from across the University.

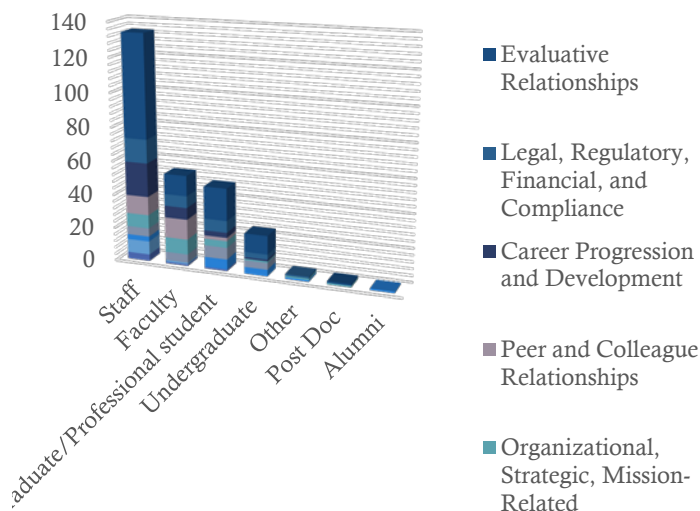
Undergraduate and graduate students combined for 27% of visits. 20% of our visitors were Faculty.

**Fig. 9: Profile by School/Organization**



Staff visitors came from every school across the University. The highest proportion of visitors from any School were Administration Staff—56, or 86%. Staff were also most visitors from Oxford College (64%), Rollins School of Public Health (74%), and the School of Medicine (50%).

**Fig. 10: URC Categories by Profile**



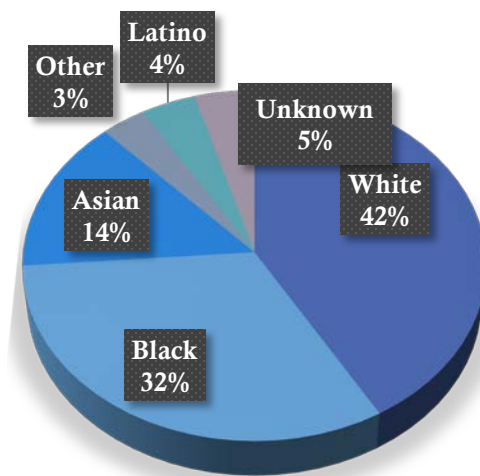
The top concerns of Staff were Evaluative Relationships (59%), followed by Career Progression and Development (15%) and Legal/Compliance (10%).

## Although the Highest Race Proportion was White, a Significantly High Proportion of Visitors were Black.

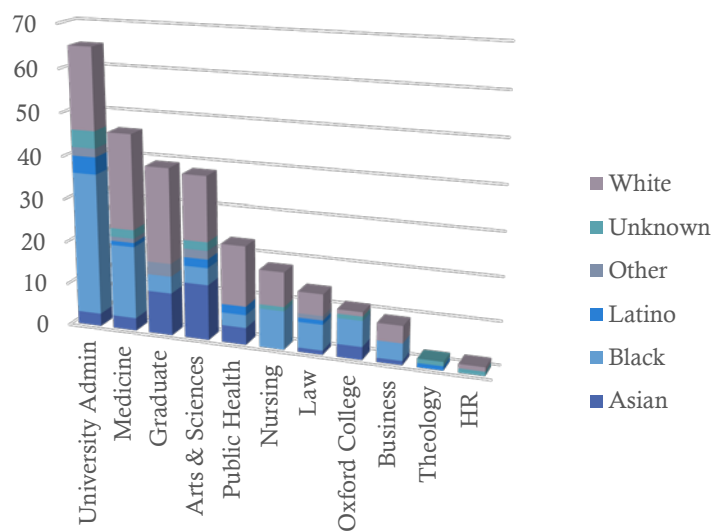
Black visitors made up 32% of the total visitors over the course of the year—and constituted a plurality of Staff visitors (46%, compared to 35% white Staff). In contrast, most Faculty visitors were white (65%). White students were the largest proportion of Graduate visitors (43%), while Asian students were the highest proportion of Undergraduate visitors (38%).

The top concern among Black visitors was Evaluative Relationships (42%), followed by Career Progression (17%) and Legal/Compliance (13%). Among white visitors, Evaluative Relationships was first (38%), followed by Legal/Compliance (14%) and Career Progression (8%).

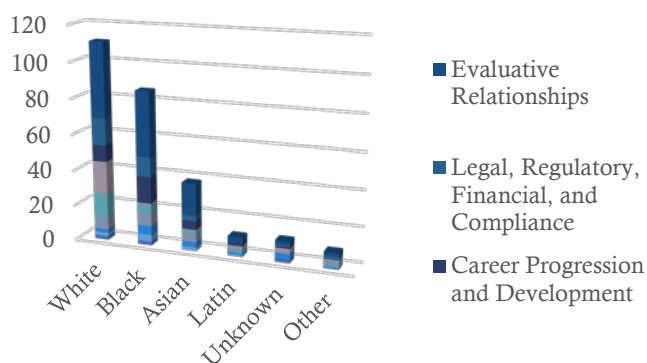
**Fig. 11: Visitors by Race**



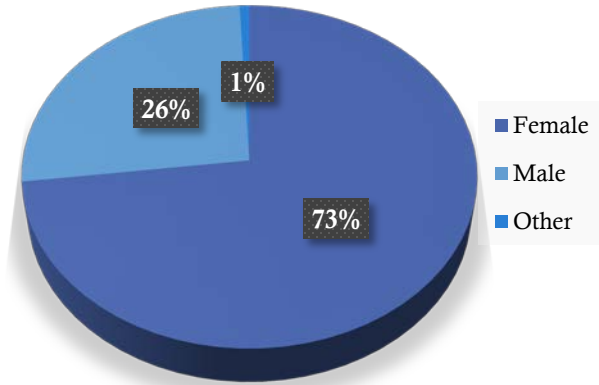
**Fig. 12: Race by School**



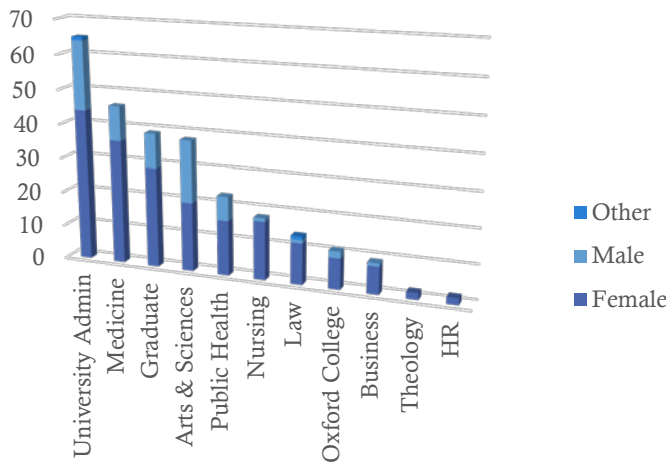
**Fig. 13: Concerns by Race**



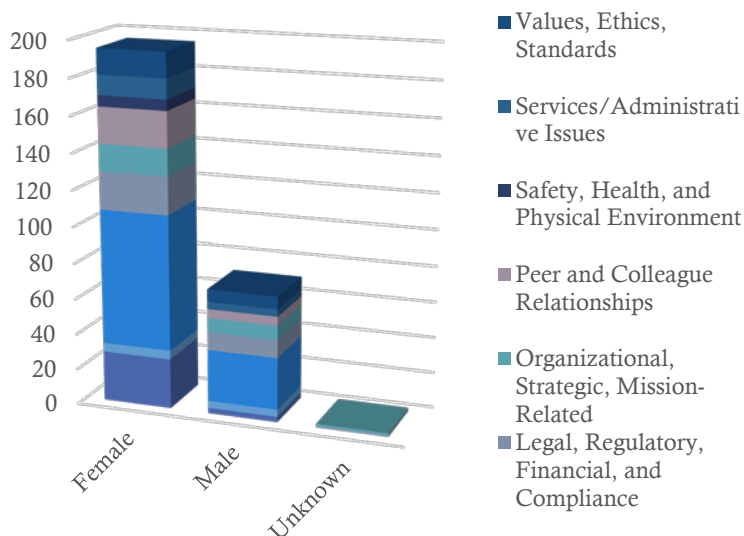
**Fig. 14: Visitors by Gender**



**Fig. 15: Gender by School/Organization**



**Fig. 16: Concern by Gender**



## An Exceptionally High Percentage of Visitors were Women.

73% of visitors were women—an extraordinarily high percentage that may reflect women experiencing more conflict, women being more comfortable coming to the Ombuds, or other factors.

This exceptionally high proportion of women visitors occurred in every school or organization across the University. More than 75% of visitors from Medicine, Laney, Nursing, Law, Business, Oxford College, Candler, and Human Resources were women. Women were 79% of Staff, 72% of Faculty, and 69% of Graduate/Professional Students.

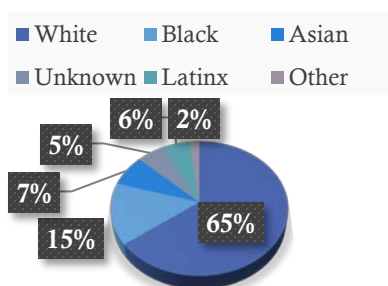
The top concern among women by far was Evaluative Relationships (38%), followed by Career Progression (14%) and Legal/Compliance (11%). Among men, the top concern was also Evaluative Relationships (41%), followed by Legal/Compliance (14%) and Organizational/Mission-Oriented (11%).

# Faculty

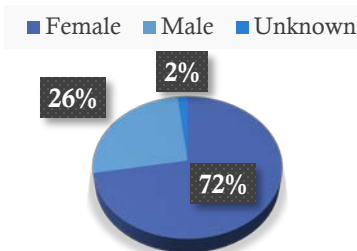
Visits from faculty were almost evenly split between tenured (46%) and non-tenured (52%) faculty. A significant majority were female (72%), approximately the same as the overall visitor percentage. Faculty had the highest percentage of white visitors at 65% (a fact which may reflect faculty demographics). Over a quarter (26%) of faculty visits came from the School of Medicine; the next highest number came from the College of Arts & Sciences (20%) and School of Law (17%).

Faculty were more concerned with “Peer and Colleague” issues than staff or students, with 22% of overall concerns reflecting these issues. Faculty were also more concerned with “Organizational/Strategic” issues than these other groups. As with all groups, “Evaluative Relationships” also scored highly.

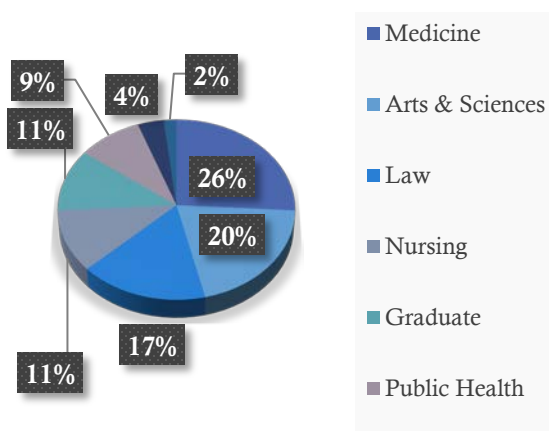
**Fig. 17: Faculty by Race**



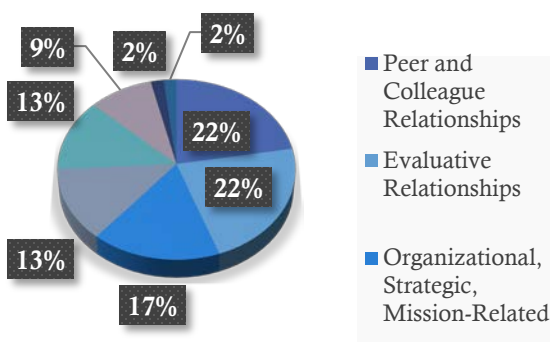
**Fig. 18: Faculty by Gender**

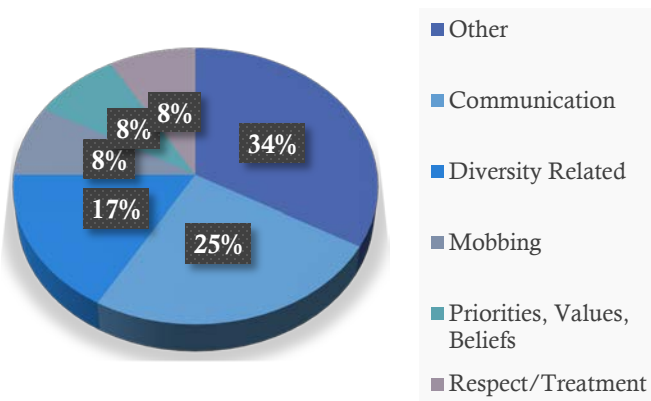
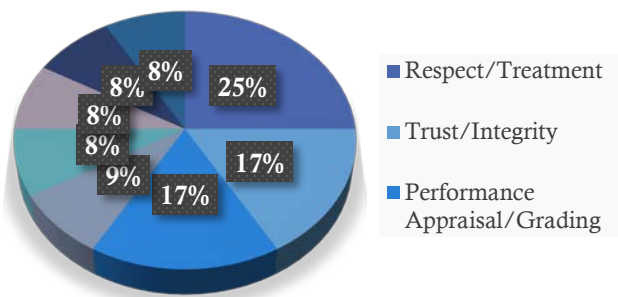
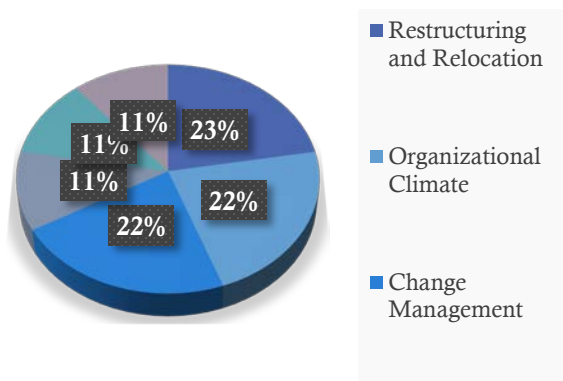


**Fig. 19: Faculty by School**



**Fig. 20: Top Faculty Concerns**



**Fig. 21: Peer Relationships (Faculty)****Fig. 22: Evaluative Relationships (Faculty)****Fig. 23: Organizational Concerns (Faculty)**

## Communication, Respect, and Change Management were Top Faculty Concerns.

Faculty were especially concerned with intradepartmental dynamics. Several visitors brought concerns about pay equity, budget allocations, and other funding issues. Concerns about the status of adjunct positions were also noted. We also noted significant concerns related to effective communication on race and gender issues.

Almost half of all organizational concerns came from the School of Medicine. Evaluative and Peer concerns were more evenly distributed. When combined, the highest concern in the College of Arts & Sciences and Laney Graduate School were related to Values, Ethics, and Standards—particularly “Standards of Conduct” (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct).

Several faculty raised issues related to COVID, particularly around assignments and communication of expectations.

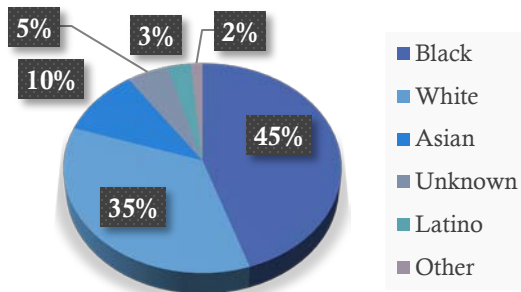
A few also raised policy questions regarding academic misconduct and ongoing trust issues with students.

# Staff

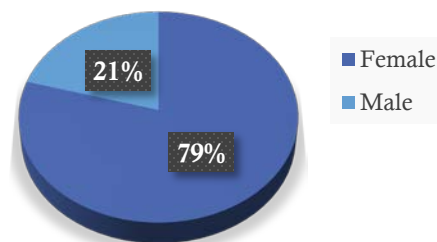
We noted several trends in our staff visitors for 2020 that were distinct from Faculty trends. Visits tended to come from younger staff, with half of all staff visitors being between the ages of 30-45 and almost a quarter (22%) between the ages of 30-35. (In contrast, faculty visitors tended to be older, with 65% of faculty visitors between the ages of 40-55). In terms of race, 45% of staff visitors were Black, compared to only 15% of faculty visitors. Although most visitors were women overall, the percentage was still higher among staff at 79%.

Staff were most concerned about relationships with supervisors/direct reports, including concerns of diversity and inclusion, as well as career progression and development.

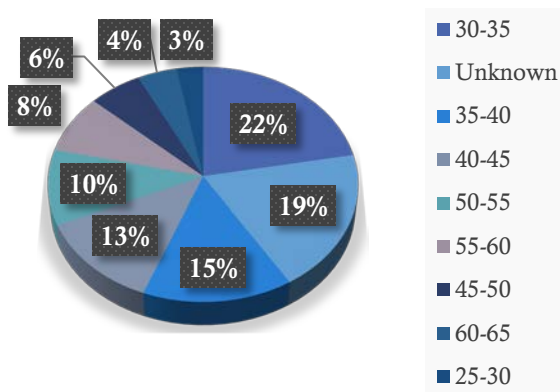
**Fig. 24: Staff by Race**



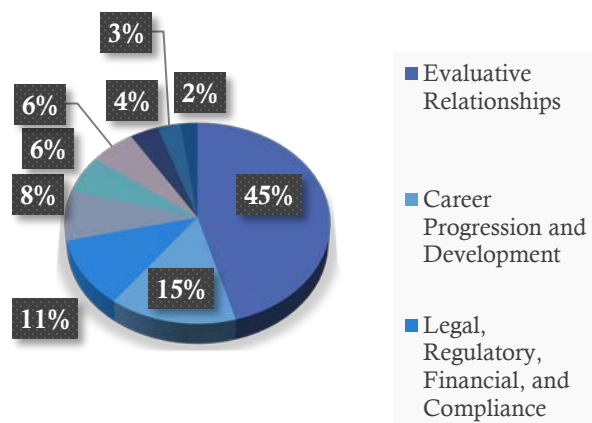
**Fig. 25: Staff by Gender**



**Fig. 26: Staff by Age**

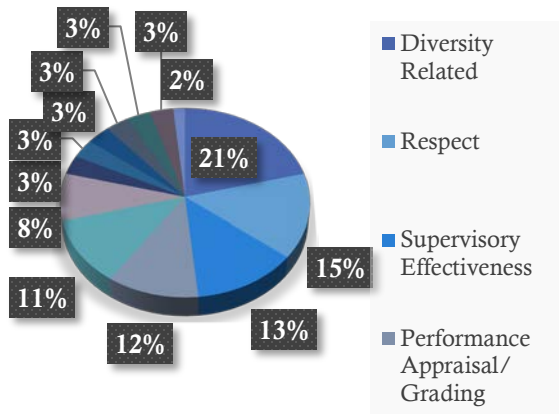


**Fig. 27: Staff Top Concerns**

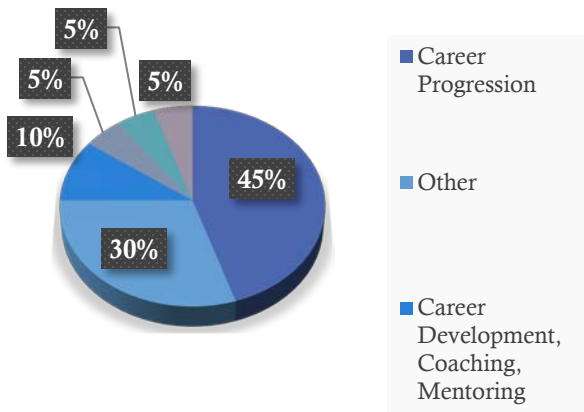




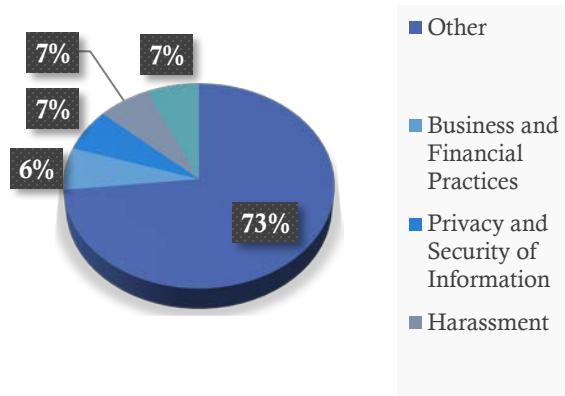
**Fig. 28: Evaluative Relationships (Staff)**



**Fig. 29: Career Progression (Staff)**



**Fig.30: Legal and Compliance (Staff)**



## Staff were Highly Concerned about Diversity Issues.

Diversity issues surfaced repeatedly among staff concerns. Numerous staff brought questions about Title IX process and procedures, sought guidance regarding antiracism strategies, or were worried about retaliation for complaints or accommodation requests. We referred most of these concerns to the Office of Equity & Inclusion.

Staff were also concerned with relationships with supervisors, particularly as they involved performance assessments, performance improvement plans (PIPs), and leadership transitions.

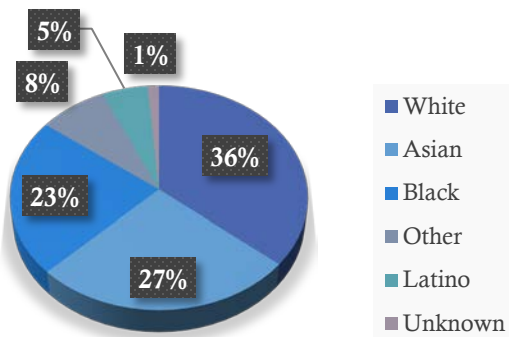
Staff also brought a significant number of questions involving their own career development and progression. Some staff asked for guidance having conversations about salary, assignments and workload, or promotion.

Finally, a significant number of staff brought concerns about safety and compliance issues, including concerns about plagiarism and research practices. Staff also brought the highest number of COVID-19 concerns.

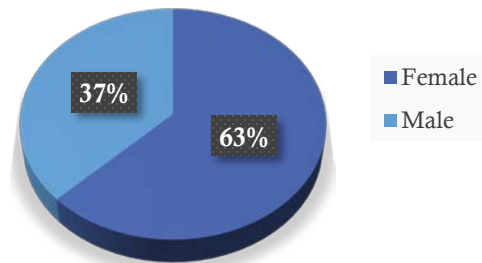
# Students

Even though 59% of Emory’s approximately 14,000 students are undergraduate, graduate and professional students constituted 65% of total visits to our office. At 40%, by far the greatest concentration of student visitors came from Laney Graduate School (in particular hard science disciplines). Compared to Emory’s total enrollment, we saw a somewhat lower percentage of white student visitors (36%, below the enrollment percentage of 44%), and relatively high percentages of Asian students (27%, compared to 14.5% enrollment) and Black students (23% vs. 10% enrollment). In terms of gender, the ratio of female visitors was also especially high—though at 63%, more balanced than staff or faculty. Students were principally concerned with Evaluative Relationships, but also sought guidance on ethical, compliance, and legal issues.

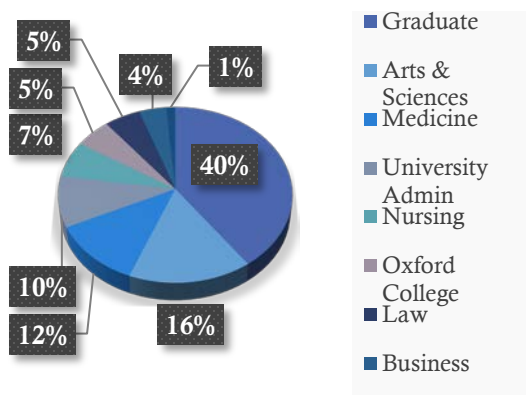
**Fig. 31: Students by Race**



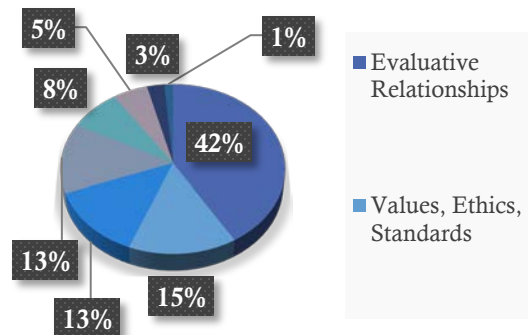
**Fig. 32: Students by Gender**



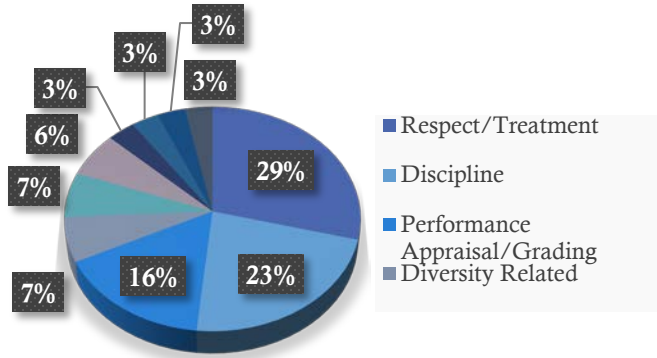
**Fig. 33: Students by School**



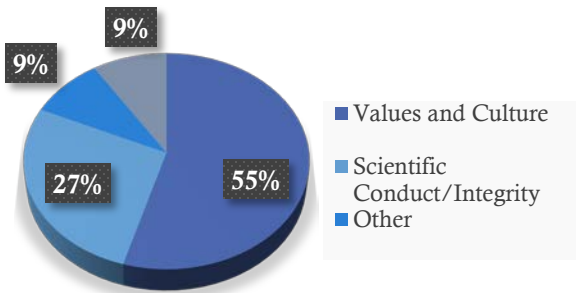
**Fig. 34: Top Student Concerns**



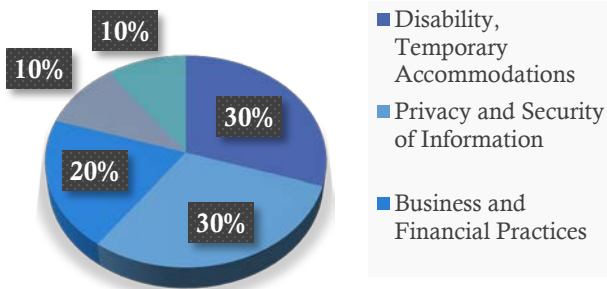
**Fig. 35: Evaluative Relationships (Students)**



**Fig. 36: Values (Students)**



**Fig. 37: Compliance (Students)**



## Students were Principally Concerned with Power Dynamics, Particularly with Respect to Labs.

Numerous graduate students brought concerns regarding the perceived use or abuse of power in evaluative relationships, most notably with respect to labs. For various reasons, students who were in their second or third years of Ph.D. programs in hard sciences were considering switching labs or completely abandoning their graduate plans because of tensions with advisors or Principle Investigators (PIs). For some of these students, the concerns were diversity related; however, the majority were related to management style, communication breakdowns, or research priorities. Graduate Students also brought concerns of a perceived lack of responsiveness or inadequate redress by administrative units.

Among undergraduates, the chief concerns involved academic misconduct or honor code proceedings. Students were unsure of what rights they had or how to advocate for themselves and sought perspective on potential outcomes and their impacts on future goals.

## Appendix A: Operations and Data Management

**Below we outline our basic procedures for receiving visitors, maintaining confidentiality, and managing data.**

### Scheduling Visits

Encounters with the Ombuds office begin when an individual or group of Emory students, faculty, or staff contacts our office, usually by email at [ombuds@emory.edu](mailto:ombuds@emory.edu). Once someone contacts our office, our intake specialist responds to that inquiry within 24 hours to schedule our first visit. As part of this process, intake assigns the visitor a “visitor number,” which becomes the identifier on all records maintained by our office from that point forward. Schedules, including our Outlook Calendar, use this visitor number and do not refer to the name(s) of the individual(s) requesting the visit.

Visits are schedule in one-hour increments, though they may last as long as two hours. During the first visit, the Ombuds will identify the basic facts, individuals, and type of the concern brought by the visitor and will work to determine the visitor’s goals. If the visitor is simply raising an issue or clarifying something, a single visit may suffice. However, navigating complex interpersonal or institutional conflicts may require multiple visits.

At the outset of every visit, we begin by defining our principles of confidentiality, independence, informality, and impartiality and make sure that the visitor understands these ethical principles. We verbally confirm that the visitor understands that communications to our office do not constitute notice to the University and ask the visitor to agree that will not be asked to participate in any formal proceedings before continuing with the visit.

### Confidentiality

We take the following steps to ensure the confidentiality of our data:

- We maintain no records, including calendars or email correspondence, referring to the visitor by name—only visitor number.
- If necessary, we may take handwritten notes to aid in identifying issues and tracking concerns; these notes are shredded at the conclusion of the visitor’s matter.
- We minimize all contact by email. In most cases, we do not communicate with visitors by email except to schedule visits. Where some additional correspondence is required, we take care not to refer to the facts of the visitor’s concern, including the visitor’s identity.
- We do not receive or maintain copies of documents from visitors. Any documents received by our office are promptly returned to the owner.
- Before communicating with any individual on behalf of the visitor, we seek the visitor’s explicit permission and limit our communications only to those specific individuals for whom we have received permission.



## Data Management

In order to track trends across the University, we record demographic data for each visitor and code each visit according to the Uniform Reporting Codes, a typology of issues promulgated by the IOA. (see Appendix C). This information is recorded using RedCAP, Emory's secure web platform for building and managing online databases. The data is recorded by the Ombuds or Associate Ombuds following each visit using a standardized survey. The data is anonymized and does not include any personal identifying information and instead refers to the visitor only by visitor number. Only the Ombuds Office has access to the data recorded to this database. All reports created from this database are presented in aggregate, with care taken to ensure that individual visitors cannot be identified.

We maintain previous years' data in RedCAP for three years.

## Appendix B: Methods

---

**The Office of the Ombuds uses a variety of methods to help visitors resolve concerns. We provide a summary of our methods and approach below.**

### Approach and Philosophy

Our work with visitors is heavily informed by Conflict Transformation theory, which is founded on the idea that conflict is not “bad” but is instead both natural and necessary. Our view is that conflicts contain both opportunities and risks for improving individuals, institutions—even society.

We view our office as part of an integrated conflict management system (“ICMS”) that spans the entire university and includes other conflict-facing departments such as HR/FSAP, DEI, Campus Life, Spiritual Life, CAPS, and safety (such as the EPD). Perhaps uniquely among these departments, the Ombuds emphasizes informal methods of conflict management, takes a systematic approach to conflict resolution, and provides a “zero barrier” place for students, faculty, and staff to raise concerns when they may be unsure where else to go. Our unique blend of independence, informality, impartiality, and confidentiality allow us to be a safe space for all concerns.

### Listening

By far the most common method we use with visitors is listening closely to our visitor’s concerns to identify the key facts, parties, and issues involved. For many visitors, simply being “heard” is a major unfulfilled need. As MIT Ombudsperson Dr. Mary Rowe has observed,

**[L]istening and delivering respect may be the most cost-effective elements of a conflict management system.** These elements are essential if people with problems are to consider coming forward. People who voice concerns sometimes report that they were met with disinterest, distrust, disrespect, loss of privacy, incredulity, humiliation, intimidation, or incompetence. Many people who escalate complaints, and many who go outside as whistleblowers, have claimed that “no one listened.”<sup>1</sup>

While there are some ICMS departments that provide a listening ear (Spiritual Life, CAPS), some Emory constituents may not feel comfortable using these resources. For these individuals, the Ombuds can provide a welcome and safe option. Moreover, because the Ombuds is comprehensive in assessing conflict across Emory systems, we can provide a

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mary Rowe, “An Organizational Ombuds Office In a System for Dealing with Conflict and Learning from Conflict, or “Conflict Management System,” 2008.



sense that “the University” is listening to the individual—which may improve the visitor’s satisfaction.

### Information Gathering

Often, visitors have questions about policies that apply to their situation. Because our office is unique in taking a comprehensive view of Emory’s ICMS and has access to data and policies across systemic boundaries, we can obtain information about how the system “actually works” to better serve constituents of all types. By obtaining and providing information to visitors about policies and practices that may or may not be written, we are able to reduce friction in the system and empower visitors to understand their concerns more fully. In turn, visitors are better able to address their concerns.

### Advice and Counsel

After listening, by far the most common approach we use with visitors is advice and counsel. We use a variety of tools to assist us in organizing the facts and analyzing visitors’ issues. For instance, we use self-assessment tools to identify beliefs, assumptions, or biases the visitor may have regarding the issue and discuss how those might be affecting the visitor’s assessment of potential outcomes. We spend significant time coaching visitors to frame their concern as an opportunity for change as opposed to an impediment to growth, with the goal of empowering the visitor to engage in effective and healthy direct action to resolve their disputes.

Examples of the models and tools we use during this phase include the *Kilmann/Thomas Model of Interpersonal Conflict-Handling Behavior*, Maire Dugan’s “Nested Theory of Conflict,” and conflict mapping techniques. We have developed our own tool, “Planning and Executing a Difficult Conversation” (see Appendix D) to assist visitors in clarifying issues and planning direct action. We engage in regular and ongoing training to stay on the forefront of developments in this field.

### Shuttle Diplomacy, Mediation, and Facilitated Conversations

Sometimes, visitors need help addressing a conflict that goes beyond their ability to engage in direct action. Whether because they feel unsafe (as when the visitor fears retaliation), because they lack confidence in their own abilities to have a healthy dialogue, or other reasons, visitors may seek our assistance in facilitating communication to address their issue. When appropriate, we use three approaches to such situations: **shuttle diplomacy**, **mediation**, and **facilitated conversations**.

**Shuttle diplomacy** requires first obtaining the visitor’s permission to reach out to the other party or parties on their behalf (which necessarily means accepting diminished confidentiality). If the visitor agrees, we can then approach the other party with an offer to hear their perspective in an effort to encourage them to engage in dialogue. By “shuttling”

between the parties, we can convey information in a way that promotes movement on the important issues and avoids misunderstandings, diversions, and escalation.

If the parties are able and willing to engage in face-to-face conversations and we conclude that such a conversation would be beneficial, we can offer **mediation** as a way of addressing visitors' concerns. Strictly voluntary and only offered if all parties to a dispute agree, mediation can be an effective way to have the parties hear one another and address concerns. Mediation begins with an "opening statements" phase in which parties must listen to one another without interruption. If the parties can continue the conversation, we guide them toward understanding one another's perspectives (even if they do not agree), with the hope of eventually reaching agreement on a plan to move forward. If emotions are running high, we can enter a "caucus" phase where the parties are in separate rooms and we serve as a go-between to the parties. Throughout, we work with both parties to reality test possible solutions and provide a listening ear.

In group settings with multiple parties, we may engage in **facilitated conversations** using techniques such as the "circle process." Because of the complexity of group settings, often the only goal of such conversations is to allow the parties to be "heard" and understand one another's positions. The structure of such conversations is similar to the opening statement phase of mediation, in which one person at a time has the authority to speak, while all others must listen. As with mediation, it requires that all parties voluntarily agree to participate—if forced, the efficacy of such an approach is greatly diminished.

In all these approaches, we maintain strict confidentiality and impartiality. We have the parties sign a statement at the beginning of mediation or facilitated conversations acknowledging that we are not parties to the conflict, that we are neutral and confidential as to all parties, and that we are not to be called as a witness in any future proceedings.

### Organizational Consultation

When asked, we may work with leaders of departments or organizations to better understand ongoing or systemic conflicts and advise the leadership of possible paths to resolution. While we remain neutral and do not conduct investigations, our systemic perspective allows us to provide an outsider's view, thereby assisting leadership in addressing organizational dynamics that have led to patterns of conflict. Our work in identifying patterns and trends through data can be very helpful in this regard.

### Surface Issues to Leadership

Our systemic perspective also allows us to surface trends and patterns in conflicts to leadership. By collecting and analyzing data on our visits, we can identify these trends in ways that allow leaders to strategize long-term solutions that reduce the potential for escalation and address the root causes of the structural problem.





In rare instances where an issue is especially urgent (as where a pattern of policy violations is ongoing and escalating in a way that is causing imminent serious harm), we can alert leadership to the problem by “ringing the bell” and making sure the leader is aware of the ongoing issue.

# Appendix C: International Ombuds Association Uniform Reporting Categories (URCs)



## INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION Uniform Reporting Categories

VERSION 2  
October 2007

### 1. Compensation & Benefits

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.

- 1.a **Compensation** (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)
- 1.b **Payroll** (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)
- 1.c **Benefits** (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)
- 1.d **Retirement, Pension** (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)
- 1.e **Other** (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above sub-categories)

### 2. Evaluative Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)

- 2.a **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 2.b **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 2.c **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 2.d **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 2.e **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 2.f **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 2.g **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 2.h **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 2.i **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 2.j **Assignments/Schedules** (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)
- 2.k **Feedback** (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)
- 2.l **Consultation** (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)

### 2.m Performance Appraisal/Grading

(job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)

- 2.n **Departmental Climate** (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility.)
- 2.o **Supervisory Effectiveness** (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)
- 2.p **Insubordination** (refusal to do what is asked)
- 2.q **Discipline** (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)
- 2.r **Equity of Treatment** (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)
- 2.s **Other** (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

### 3. Peer and Colleague Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)

- 3.a **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 3.b **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 3.c **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 3.d **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 3.e **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 3.f **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 3.g **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 3.h **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 3.i **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 3.j **Other** (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

### 4. Career Progression and Development

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)

- 4.a **Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes** (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)
- 4.b **Job Classification and Description** (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)
- 4.c **Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment** (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)
- 4.d **Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity** (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories)
- 4.e **Career Progression** (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)
- 4.f **Rotation and Duration of Assignment** (non-completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)
- 4.g **Resignation** (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)
- 4.h **Termination/Non-Renewal** (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)
- 4.i **Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff** (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)
- 4.j **Position Elimination** (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)
- 4.k **Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring** (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)
- 4.l **Other** (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above sub-categories)



## 5. 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 waste, fraud or abuse.

- 5.a **Criminal Activity** (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)
- 5.b **Business and Financial Practices** (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)
- 5.c **Harassment** (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)
- 5.d **Discrimination** (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc. [being part of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category – applies in the U.S.] )
- 5.e **Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation** (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)
- 5.f **Accessibility** (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)
- 5.g **Intellectual Property Rights** (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)
- 5.h **Privacy and Security of Information** (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)
- 5.i **Property Damage** (personal property damage, liabilities)
- 5.j **Other** (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above sub-categories)  
.....  
.....

## 6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

- 6.a **Safety** (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for training and equipment)
- 6.b **Physical Working/Living Conditions** (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)
- 6.c **Ergonomics** (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)
- 6.d **Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)
- 6.e **Security** (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying "compromise of classified or top secret" information)

- 6.f **Telework/Flexplace** (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)
- 6.g **Safety Equipment** (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)
- 6.h **Environmental Policies** (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)
- 6.i **Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance** (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)
- 6.j **Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)  
.....  
.....

## 7. Services/Administrative Issues

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

- 7.a **Quality of Services** (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)
- 7.b **Responsiveness/Timeliness** (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)
- 7.c **Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules** (impact of non-disciplinary decisions, decisions about requests for administrative and academic services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)
- 7.d **Behavior of Service Provider(s)** (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)
- 7.e **Other** (any services or administrative issue not described by the above sub-categories)  
.....  
.....

## 8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

- 8.a **Strategic and Mission-Related/ Strategic and Technical Management** (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)
- 8.b **Leadership and Management** (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)

- 8.c **Use of Positional Power/Authority** (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)
- 8.d **Communication** (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)
- 8.e **Restructuring and Relocation** (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g. downsizing, off shoring, outsourcing)
- 8.f **Organizational Climate** (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)
- 8.g **Change Management** (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)
- 8.h **Priority Setting and/or Funding** (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)
- 8.i **Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results** (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)
- 8.j **Interdepartmental/Interorganization Work/Territory** (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)
- 8.k **Other** (any organizational issue not described by the above sub-categories)  
.....  
.....

## 9. 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.

- 9.a **Standards of Conduct** (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)
- 9.b **Values and Culture** (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)
- 9.c **Scientific Conduct/Integrity** (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)
- 9.d **Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8** (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)
- 9.e **Other** (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above sub-categories)  
.....  
.....

# Appendix D: Planning and Executing a Difficult Conversation

---

## PLANNING AND EXECUTING A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

- I. Description. In this section, you will describe the issue you are facing as objectively as possible, which will help you identify the factors at play and possible solutions.

*Describe the situation you are seeking to address in your own words.*

*Who are the parties involved?*

*Write out a timeline of the issue.*

*Was there a specific action that prompted you to act, or a series of actions over time?*

*Have there been previous attempts to address the issue? What happened in those attempts?*



- II. **Self-Assessment.** We all have a default approach to conflict, and we all bring our own biases and beliefs to the table. In this section, you will analyze your own approach to this conflict and any beliefs, assumptions, or biases you may hold. This self-assessment will help you to be mindful of your own responses and help you remain open to creative solutions.

*What is your "conflict style"?*

Take this [conflict style assessment](#). Answer the questions based on the specific issue you are experiencing. Is the approach you have been using appropriate for this conflict? Would another style achieve different results?

*Beliefs/Biases*

What fundamental beliefs do you have about the situation or the other person? What data or observations are informing those beliefs? How might your life experiences be influencing your views of the issue? How might the following factors affect your view of the issue: cultural differences? Role or status? Tenure or experience? Job function? Life experience?

*Are you missing any information? What questions would you like to ask the other side?*

III. **Pre-Planning.** Now that you have analyzed the issue and reflected on your own approach, you can use this information to help plan your conversation.

*Framing the Conversation: Goals*

What are your goals in having this conversation?

*Framing the Conversation: Interests*

If you are looking for a particular outcome, why are you looking for that outcome? What needs would you like met?

*Framing the Conversation: Impact*

How is this situation affecting you? Be specific.

*Purpose Statement*

Write out your reason for having the conversation in a clear, concise, and actionable purpose statement.



IV. **Having the Conversation.** You can now use your pre-planning work to structure your conversation. Your conversation structure might look something like this:

1. **Frame the conversation.** Start by inviting the other person to engage in the conversation with you (for example, by saying “can we talk?”). State your positive intentions (“I would like to work something out between us”), and then lead with the clear and direct purpose statement you prepared above. You might also want to state how the situation has impacted you.
2. **Listen.** When you have finished, invite the other person to give a response. Listen to the other person, summarize what they have said (without saying “what I’m hearing you say is...”), and ask clarifying questions (including any that you have pre-planned). Make sure that you give the other person time to fully express their views (doing so will make them more receptive to engaging on solutions).
3. **Offer Solutions.** Having thought through possible solutions prior to the conversation, you can then offer those ideas after the other person has finished speaking. Keep the focus on positive outcomes, i.e. outcomes that meet both of your interests. Invite them to collaborate by sharing their ideas.
4. **Reality Check.** Consider the options on the table through the lenses of your work environment, timing, your respective styles, and other factors particular to your situation.
5. **Choose a path.** Together, select which of the various solutions (or combinations of solutions) seems most likely to work.
6. **Check-in and Accountability.** Designate a specific check-in date and time to reconvene and recalibrate as necessary. It may take several attempts to find what works best. If you decide that the solution is only partially working, keep what works and think through other ways to address remaining issues.