Letter from the Ombudsperson

Dear Colleagues:

2021 brought both challenges and growth to the Office of the Ombuds. While the pandemic has continued to dominate the life of our community, we have continued to adapt while fulfilling our mission to be a confidential, independent, informal, and impartial resource for managing conflict and raising institutional concerns.

Overall, our second year saw a significant increase in both unique and repeat visitors. Several themes emerged in our visitors’ concerns. Many visitors expressed burnout, stress, and anxiety arising from the increased demands of working, teaching, and learning during a pandemic. We saw a marked increase in intragroup strain and frayed group dynamics across all constituencies, with a significant rise in conflicts occurring online. Finally, concerns of bias, discrimination, and inequitable treatment are still all too common. These trends in conflict make it clear that we as a community remain under a great deal of stress.

Throughout the year, our office has continued to work to promote effective conflict management skills and approaches. We have introduced several new initiatives, including a “Text the Ombuds” communication line (“Text ‘Ombuds’ to 678.403.6991”), while continuing to expand and grow our core services. We have held many facilitated conversations to help both groups and individuals understand one another and work toward resolution, and we have held mediations allowing individuals to reach resolution without resorting to formal processes. We have also held confidential group “listening sessions” to help staff collectively and anonymously convey their perceptions and views to leadership. We look forward to continuing to offer and expanding upon these services in 2022 and beyond.

Thank you to the Emory community for continuing to trust us to listen to your concerns. We are grateful for the strong support we have received and the many positive interactions we have had. We continue to believe strongly that effective engagement with conflict will make Emory an even healthier, more vibrant, stronger organization for our entire community.

Best Regards,

Lynell Cadray
University Ombudsperson & Sr. Advisor to the President
Visitors By the Numbers

Between January 6, 2021, and January 5, 2022, the Office of the Ombuds saw a total of 402 visits from 291 individual visitors—a 15% increase in overall visits and an 8% increase in unique visitors from 2020. The months of March and August saw the most visitors, with 49 each, while January saw the fewest with 18. Like 2020, most visitors elected remote visits, most of which were conducted via videoconference.

Top Concern Categories
The Ombuds Office categorizes visitors’ concerns according to the Uniform Reporting Categories promulgated by the International Ombuds Office (see Appendix A). This year the top category across the University was **Organizational, Strategic, Mission-Related**, which includes concerns about “where and how the organization is moving,” morale, change management, and related issues. 21% of total concerns were in this category. **Evaluative Relationships**, which involves concerns about hierarchical relationships (faculty-student, supervisor-direct report), was the second-highest reported category (20%). **Peer & Colleague Relationships**, or concerns about non-hierarchical relationships (students within the same organization, faculty members of the same department, etc.), was third with 19% of total concerns.
Top Concern Sub-Categories
Within each general category, the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories define several sub-categories to specifically identify a visitor’s topic of concern. In 2021, the top sub-category of concern was the Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related sub-category Organizational Climate. This one sub-category captures concerns and issues “related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning.” 9% of visitors’ concerns involved this single sub-category. Close behind was the sub-category of Respect & Treatment within the general category Peer & Colleague Relationships. This sub-category captures “demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crueness, etc.” within non-supervisory faculty-student relationships and constituted 8% of all concerns raised by visitors.

The third most identified sub-category of concerns involved Administrative Decisions & Interpretation/Application of Rules within the Services & Administrative Issues general category. This sub-category captures the “impact of non-disciplinary decisions and decisions about requests for administrative and academic services” and constituted 7% of total concerns. Together, the above three sub-categories constituted almost a quarter (24%) of total concerns.

Although not one of the top three sub-categories, visitors also often reported concerns of Respect & Treatment within Evaluative Relationships (with an additional 5% of visitors’ concerns falling in this sub-category). The prevalence of Respect & Treatment concerns within both Peer & Colleague and Evaluative Relationships (together, 13% of total concerns) paint a picture of fraying interpersonal and group dynamics, especially when coupled with the high incidence of concerns regarding Organizational Climate.
Visitor Profiles

Visitors to our office came from across the university and from all constituencies.

![Visitors by Constituency](image)

**Constituency**

50% of visitors to our office were staff, while 24% were faculty and 23% were students (14% graduate/professional/post-doc and 9% undergraduate). 25% of concerns brought by both staff and faculty were Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related. Evaluative Relationship concerns were also prevalent among staff and faculty. Faculty also brought a significant number of Peer & Colleague Relationship concerns. Top concerns among students were Peer & Colleague Relationships (35% of student concerns), followed by “Services & Administrative Issues” (27%) and “Evaluative Relationships” (20%).

**Administrative Units**

Over 30% of all concerns involved University Administrative Units (non-academic departments serving the whole University). With respect to individual colleges, visitors most often raised issues involving the College of Arts and Sciences (23%). 22% of visitors raised concerns involving the School of Medicine. Constituents from these three administrative units constituted the vast majority of our 2021 visitors.
**Gender**

75% of visitors to our office identified as female, while 24% identified as male and 1% identified as non-binary.
Top concerns among women were **Evaluative Relationships** (24% of concerns brought by women); **Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related** (21%); and **Peer & Colleague Relationships** (16%). Male visitors most often brought **Peer & Colleague Relationships** (25%) and **Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related** concerns (18%). Transgender and non-binary visitors commonly raised **Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related** and **Peer & Colleague Relationship** concerns.

**Race**

Over half (51%) of our visitors were white/Caucasian, while 31% were Black or African American, 10% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4% Latinx. These percentages varied somewhat across constituency. For instance, among staff, 44% of our staff visitors were Black or African American and 47% were white/Caucasian. 45% of our student visitors were white/Caucasian, while 24% were Asian/Pacific Islander; Black or African American students comprised a relatively smaller proportion of 18%. 61% of faculty visitors were white/Caucasian while 19% were Black/African American.

![Fig.5: Visitors by Race](image)

Among Black visitors, top concerns were **Organizational, Strategic, Mission-Related** (24% of concerns) or involved **Evaluative Relationships** (16%). **Evaluative Relationship** concerns were also prevalent among both Asian/Pacific Islander and Latinx visitors (28% and 30% respectively). White visitors’ top concerns involved **Evaluative Relationships** (21%), **Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related** concerns (20%), and **Peer/Colleague Relationships** (20%).
Outcomes

In 2021 the Office of the Ombuds began tracking outcomes. These outcomes include coaching (providing guidance about policies, procedures, or conflict approaches); facilitated conversations (guided discussions between individuals or groups); shuttle diplomacy (serving as an intermediary between individuals); referrals (providing information about or connecting visitors to on-campus resources, such as CAPS or OEI); and support resources (providing information about self-help). The majority of our 291 visitors (72%) received coaching. We held facilitated conversations with 33 visitors and engaged in shuttle diplomacy with an additional 17, for a total of 50 intermediated communication efforts (17% of our total outcomes).
In our second year, we saw both similarities to and differences from patterns that emerged during our first year. One significant change was in the top category of concern. In 2020, the largest single category of concerns (39%) involved Evaluative Relationships; no other category was close. This year, Evaluative Relationships were still significant, but the top category was instead Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related. This category of concern emerged most significantly among Black/African American visitors and staff, though it was a significant concern among faculty as well.

The top sub-categories also changed significantly between 2020 and 2021. In 2020, the top sub-category of concerns involved Respect & Treatment within Evaluative Relationships. As noted above, in 2021 our most-raised sub-category of concerns involved the Organizational Climate of a given office, department, or group. Visitors also commonly voiced concerns about Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/ Application of Rules. Respect & Treatment concerns within Evaluative Relationships were significant in number but were eclipsed by the number of concerns about Respect & Treatment within Peer & Colleague Relationships.

The high percentage of female visitors this year (75%) was slightly higher than, but similar to, the ratio of female visitors in 2020 (73%). We saw an increase in the percentage of visitors who were white/Caucasian (51% of our 2021 visitors compared to 42% in 2020), with corresponding decreases in Asian/Pacific Islander (10% in 2021 vs. 14% in 2020) visitors and visitors of an unidentified race or ethnicity (4% in 2021 vs. 8% in 2020). The percentages of Black/African American and Latinx visitors remained essentially the same, with 31% of our 2021 visitors being Black/African American (compared to 32% in 2020) and 4% being Latinx (compared to 4% in 2020).
As in 2020, the most significant proportion of our visitors were staff (unchanged from 50%). We saw slightly more faculty (24% of our total, compared to 20% in 2020). Students altogether were 23% of our visitors, a slight decrease from 27% in 2020. This decrease was almost exclusively in the proportion of graduate students & post-docs (13% in 2021 vs. 18% in 2020). The percentage of undergraduate students remained the same (9% in both years).
Common Themes and Patterns

Intragroup dynamics are strained.
Across the University, we saw a significant pattern of groups—departments, units, student organizations—facing intraorganizational strain and conflict. As noted, these patterns emerged in the identification of several sub-categories of concern, particularly Organizational Climate concerns (our largest single sub-category). The significant increase in concerns about Respect & Treatment within both Evaluative and Peer & Colleague Relationships also is a sign of these stressed intragroup dynamics. Other categories in which we saw emerging trends of group strain include Strategic/Mission-Related concerns within the Organizational, Strategic, & Mission-Related category (that is, concerns about “principles, decisions, and actions related to where and how the organization is moving”) and Values and Culture concerns within the Values, Ethics, & Standards category (which captures concerns about “questions, concerns, or issues about the values or culture of the organization”). These categories together may capture rank-and-file concerns with morale and organizational direction.

COVID-19 remains a significant factor.
In 2021, 7.4% of our visitors had concerns directly related to the impact of Covid-19 (a decrease in percentage from 2020, in which 10% of our total concerns were Covid-19 related). Most visitors with Covid-19 related concerns were staff (65%). 80% were women; 70% were white/Caucasian and 20% were Black. Top Covid-19 concerns were Services/Administrative issues, particularly administrative decisions and interpretation of rules and polices (25% of Covid-19 concerns). Telework/Flex-space issues (and differences in expectations for in-office vs. remote work) were also prevalent, as were communication issues between supervisors and supervisees on Covid-related expectations.

Although the proportion of visitors' concerns directly related to Covid-19 shrank relative to 2021, the strain of the pandemic on the Emory community was also evident in other concerns, particularly increases in “Organizational Climate” and “Respect/Treatment” concerns. While these trends are not explicitly tied to Covid-19, they may be indicative of the continued impact of Covid-19 on social and interpersonal interactions. They may also indicate other stressors such as increased turnover.

Equity and diversity concerns remain.
11% of our total concerns in 2021 were “diversity-related,” falling under the following five sub-categories:

1. Diversity-Related concerns within Evaluative Relationships
2. Equity of Treatment concerns within Evaluative Relationships
3. Diversity-Related concerns within Peer & Colleague Relationships
4. Harassment concerns falling under Legal, Regulatory, & Compliance
5. Discrimination concerns falling under Legal, Regulatory, & Compliance
65% of those bringing concerns under these five categories were women, while 31% were men and 3% were transgender or nonbinary. 35% were white, 32% were Black, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4% were Latinx. Almost 40% of these concerns were brought by graduate or professional students, while faculty brought 32%, staff 16%, and undergraduates 10%.

Overall, we saw a 20% increase in the number of diversity concerns relative to 2020. The most significant change from 2020 is an increase in Diversity-Related Peer & Colleague Relationship concerns and corresponding decrease in Diversity-Related Evaluative Relationship concerns. In 2020, almost 70% (69.2%) of diversity concerns involved Evaluative Relationships; in 2021, only 23% of such concerns involved Evaluative Relationships. These reductions mirror the increase in diversity concerns involving Peer & Colleague Relationships. In 2020, 23% of diversity concerns involved Peer & Colleague Relationships; in 2021, that proportion increased to 48%.

Another significant change from 2020 was the increase in faculty and graduate/professional/post-doc students voicing diversity concerns. Faculty concerns increased in all diversity categories, while graduate/professional/post-doc students increased most dramatically within Peer & Colleague Relationships.

**Conflict management options remain unclear.**

Students, staff, and faculty alike expressed confusion and a lack of clarity on the options offered by Emory to help them manage conflict. Emory lacks an “integrated” conflict management system in which conflict procedures are understood to work together. Because of this, visitors often do not comprehend what formal or informal options are available to them or understand how to engage with those options.

Most formal conflict adjudication procedures at Emory are either those required by law (such as Title IX) or created to enforce Emory policies (such as Honor Council). Relatively few options exist for adjudicating disputes between individuals. Most of those options that do exist take the form of
“grievance” procedures, in which an individual files a complaint with an appropriate office alleging that another individual has violated an Emory policy in some way. While available, these procedures are often hard to find and difficult to initiate. Those individuals who do engage with such processes are often unclear as to their rights (including as to confidentiality), the rights of the other part(ies), the standards to be applied, and/or what potential outcomes might be. Moreover, many of our visitors lack awareness of support resources that might be available to them and that might mitigate the need for formal options.

In some cases, greater clarity on the relationships between formal procedures, support services, and informal options—that is, a more “integrated” conflict management system—might have mitigated or prevented concerns altogether. A better, more comprehensive understanding of conflict management resources at Emory would likely be helpful to all constituents.
Appendix A: 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, job salary classification/band)
   1.b Payroll (administration of pay, check wrong or late)
   1.c Benefits (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/bi-annual 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 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, whistleblowing)
   2.i Physical Violence (actual or threat 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 response 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)

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
   college 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 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, whistleblowing)
   3.i Physical Violence (actual or threat 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
   recruiting 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
   protocols, 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 relocation
   rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)
   4.d Tenure/Position Security/Amplification (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 positions/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 or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)
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 buildings by outsiders, anti-terrorism 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 Responsive 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 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/quantity 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, offshoring, 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/thinking 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 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 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 research misconduct or misdeeds, 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)