

ANNUAL REPORT

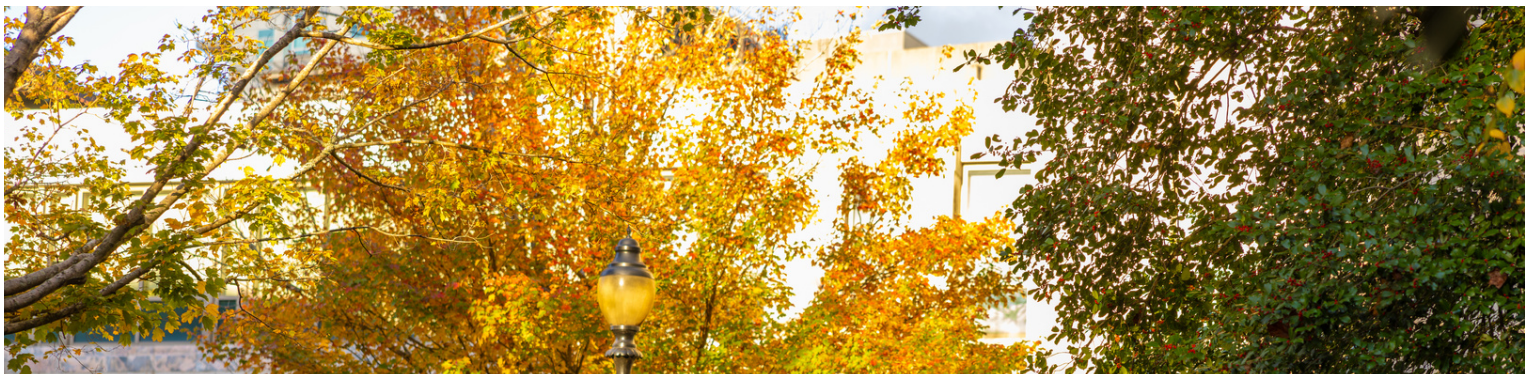
2024-2025



EMORY
UNIVERSITY

Office of the
University
Ombuds





DEAR COLLEAGUES:

Happy International Ombuds Day! Each year, Emory's Office of the Ombuds celebrates by connecting with our community and sharing our Annual Report (AY'24-25), highlighting our work and impact.

These are challenging times. Conflict and uncertainty can disrupt both workplace dynamics and individual well-being. As your Ombuds, we are committed to fostering open dialogue, active listening, and collaboration—helping our community uphold values of fairness, dignity, respect, and open communication.

This past year, use of the Ombuds office rose by 21%. More community members engaged in one-on-one visits, mediations, small group dialogues, and listening sessions. Many moved beyond individual consultations to collaborative approaches, transforming conflict into constructive conversations and solutions.

Our role is two-fold: to provide a confidential, trusted space for surfacing and resolving conflict, and to serve as a barometer of Emory's climate. By listening to concerns and identifying emerging patterns, we help leaders anticipate pressures and chart positive pathways forward.

This work is possible because of our dedicated team—Brian Green, Associate Ombuds, and Ren Brooks, Administrative Assistant—and the trust of our leaders and community, for which we are grateful. It is a privilege to serve Emory and contribute to an engaged, collegial environment.

Best Regards,

Lynell Cadray
University Ombuds and
Senior Advisor to the President



OUR PRINCIPLES

CONFIDENTIAL

Communication with the Ombuds is confidential to the extent permitted by law.

INDEPENDENT

The Ombuds operates independently, free from interference in its duties.

INFORMAL

We provide alternative options for resolving disputes.

IMPARTIAL

The Ombuds is a neutral office welcome to all.



THE OMBUDS ROLE

Established in 2019, the Emory University Ombuds Office (University Ombuds) was created with the support of various university groups and leadership. Our purpose is to support Emory's mission of teaching, research, learning, and service by providing a confidential space where members of the community can address concerns, questions, or conflicts in a productive way.

What We Do

The Ombuds Office is here to promote respect, civility, and ethical conduct across campus. We aim to prevent conflict by alerting university leadership to potential policy issues, identifying trends of concern, and recommending changes to university practices.

As an independent and neutral resource, the University Ombuds is open to all faculty, staff, and students who need a safe space to discuss issues, misunderstandings, or concerns that may not fall within formal university procedures.

We are here to help foster mutual respect and help resolve misunderstandings in a collaborative environment. The University Ombuds provides guidance on various university-related matters, offering confidential advice and informal support for anyone looking to address concerns—whether it's interpersonal conflict, questions about university policies, or broader systemic issues.

How We Help

As impartial third parties, University Ombuds are here to listen to concerns, provide referrals, and offer flexible options for addressing issues. Whether you are facing a dispute, navigating university structures, or simply seeking information, we can guide you in finding the best course of action. All discussions within the office are confidential and off-the-record, ensuring that visitors can speak freely without fear of repercussions.



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The University Ombuds follows the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice set by the International Ombuds Association (IOA). Our goal is to help resolve concerns outside of formal university processes, offering a resource for anyone looking for an alternative approach to conflict resolution.

Professional Ethical Standards

Confidentiality. Confidentiality is at the core of what we do. The University Ombuds does not keep records with personally identifying information, and our ombuds do not confirm the identity of visitors or disclose details of conversations without permission. The only exception to this confidentiality is if there is an imminent risk of serious harm or if required by law. Communicating with the Ombuds Office does not serve as formal notice to the university.

Independence. The University Ombuds operates independently from other university offices and is accountable only to the University President. This independence is key to maintaining our neutrality and ensuring that all visitors are safe and respected.

Impartiality. As an unbiased third-party organization, the Ombuds Office maintains neutrality and does not favor any side. We champion fair processes and ensure that all parties involved in a dispute understand their rights. Our commitment to impartiality means we have no vested interest in the outcomes of the situations we assist with, and we promptly disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

Informality. Our role is strictly informal. We do not participate in formal investigations, make decisions, or take part in university actions. Instead, we provide alternative, collaborative options for resolving disputes.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

The University Ombuds Office is deeply committed to connecting with the Emory community to build and strengthen partnerships, be a bridge of support, and help address institutional challenges. To that end, we engaged in a total of 56 engagements across the university throughout the academic year. We participated in 26 (46.4%) event outreach activities, which provided rich opportunities for community interaction and relationship building. We performed 11 program education activities to help academic departments, staff units, and campus partners learn more about the ombuds role and function, including ways in which the office could be leveraged in new and unique situations. We also conducted 11 training sessions on a variety of topics, including civility, psychological safety, and conflict resolution. We also contributed to 8 newsletters to help promote conflict awareness on campus.



OUR VISITORS

Engagements

During the 2024-2025 Academic Year, the University Ombuds welcomed a total of 334 individual visitors, who made a collective 474 separate visits. We also held 18 Listening Sessions with groups of over 5 participants, with an estimated total attendance of 235. Finally, we facilitated 4 conversations with larger groups, with an estimated audience of 120. Our total number of engagements (including individual visits and group processes) was 689.

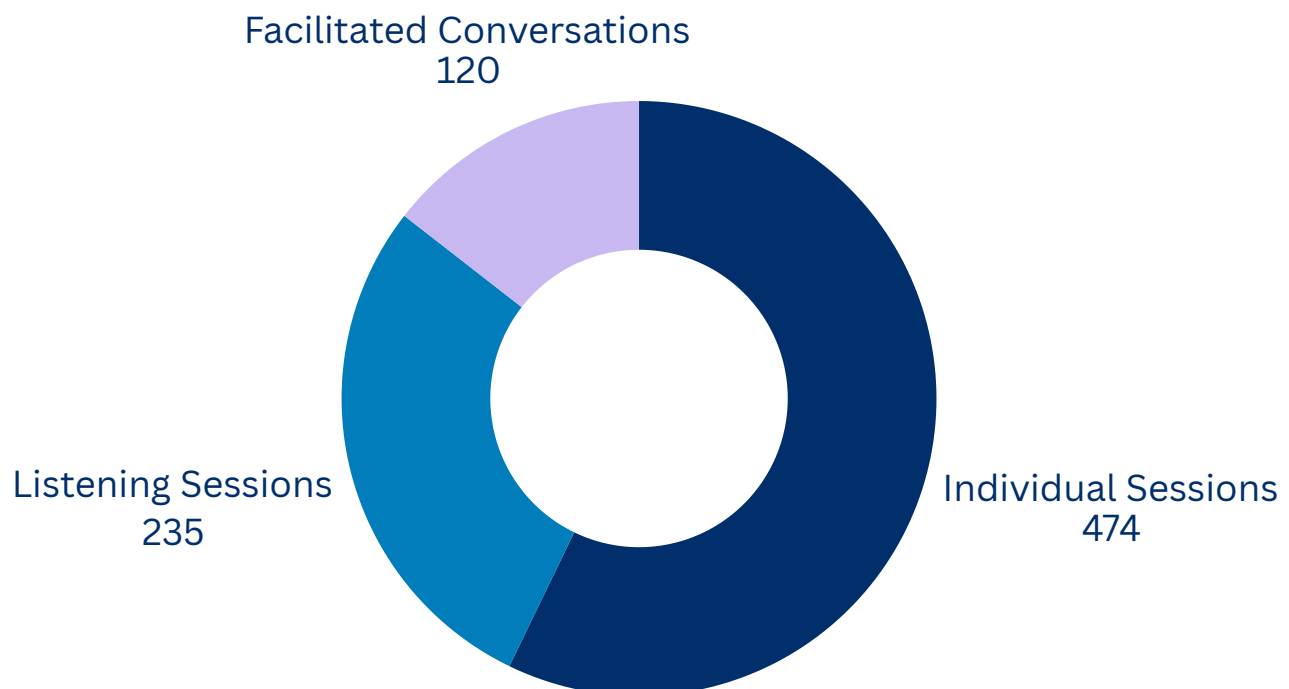


Fig. 1(A): Session Types

OUR VISITORS

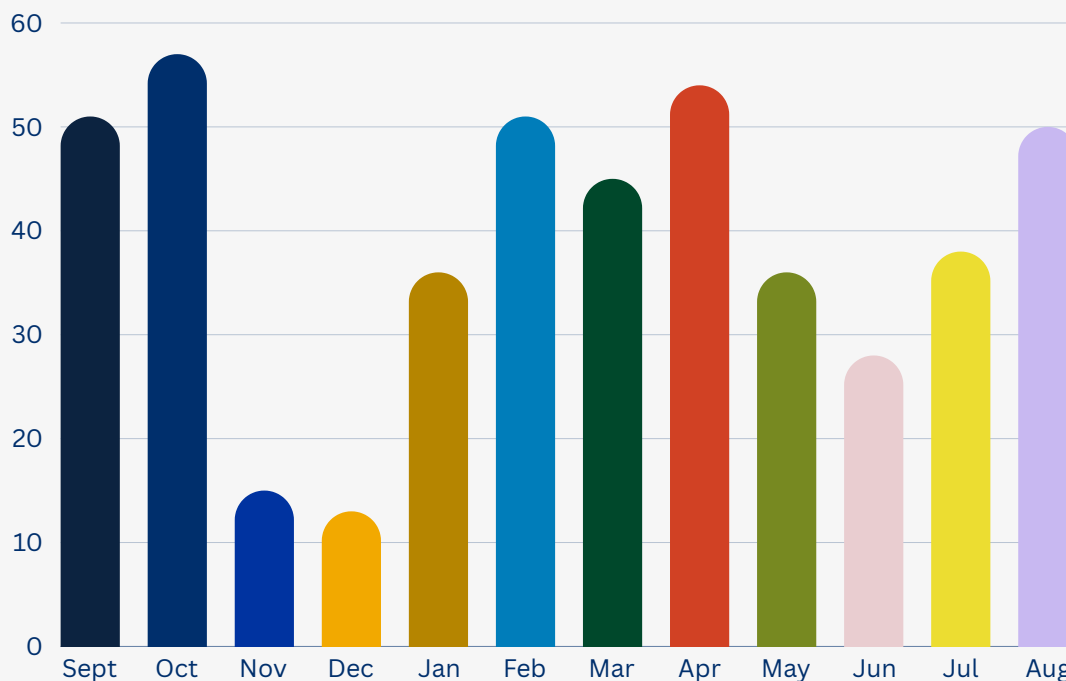


Fig. 1(B): Individual Visits per Month

Notable Growth in Visitor Participation

The substantial rise in visitors and participants compared to last year—an increase of over 21% from AY'23-24—highlights the remarkable expansion in listening sessions and facilitated conversations in recent years. Unlike previous years, where participants in these sessions were categorized as visitors, we have chosen to separate these groups this year to provide a clearer representation of our efforts. We exclusively track the demographic data of our individual visitors to ensure the anonymity of group discussions.

OUR VISITORS

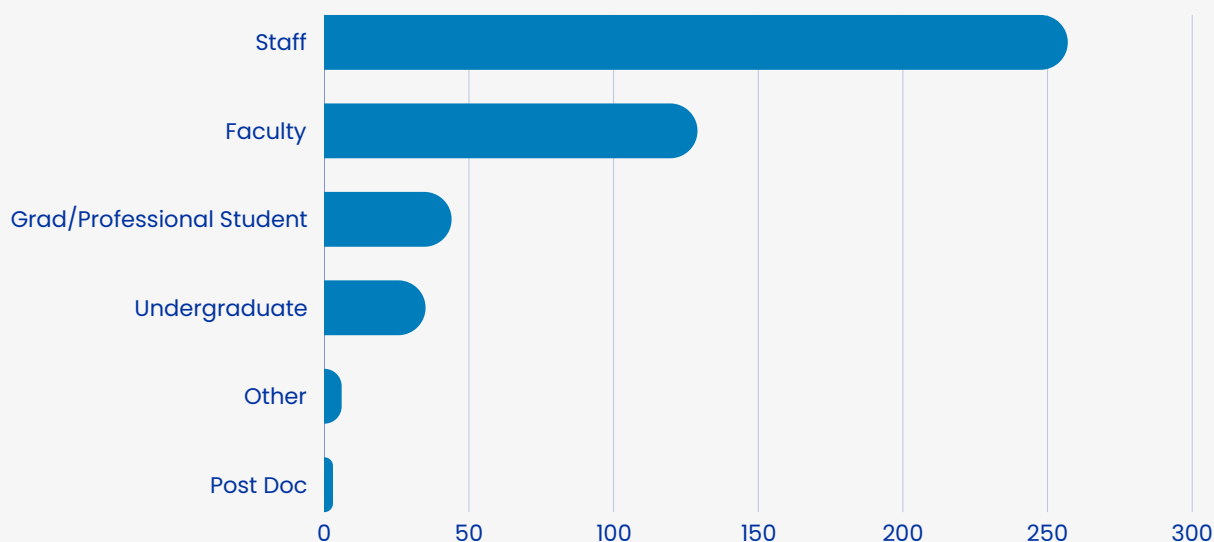


Fig. 2: Individual Visitor Constituency

Visitor Constituency

We monitor visitor constituency—identifying whether a visitor is faculty, staff, graduate/professional student, or undergraduate student—for both first-time and returning visitors. However, we do not track constituency for participants in Listening Sessions or Facilitated Conversations.

A comparison of our constituency data with the academic year 2023-2024 shows consistent participation from staff and faculty members. Notably, staff participation rose significantly from 218 last year to 257 this year, marking a **17.8% increase**. Faculty members experienced a modest rise, increasing from 116 to 129. Participation among graduate and professional students increased slightly from 42 to 44, while undergraduate participation also saw a small uptick from 33 to 35. Conversely, the number of visitors categorized as “Other” decreased slightly from 9 to 6, and Postdoctoral visits remained unchanged at 3.

OUR VISITORS

Visitor Demographics

The Ombuds Office carefully monitors and analyzes visitor demographics to identify potential trends and ensure we are effectively serving our diverse community. To safeguard group anonymity, we do not track demographic data for listening sessions or facilitated conversations.

Visitors by Race and Ethnicity

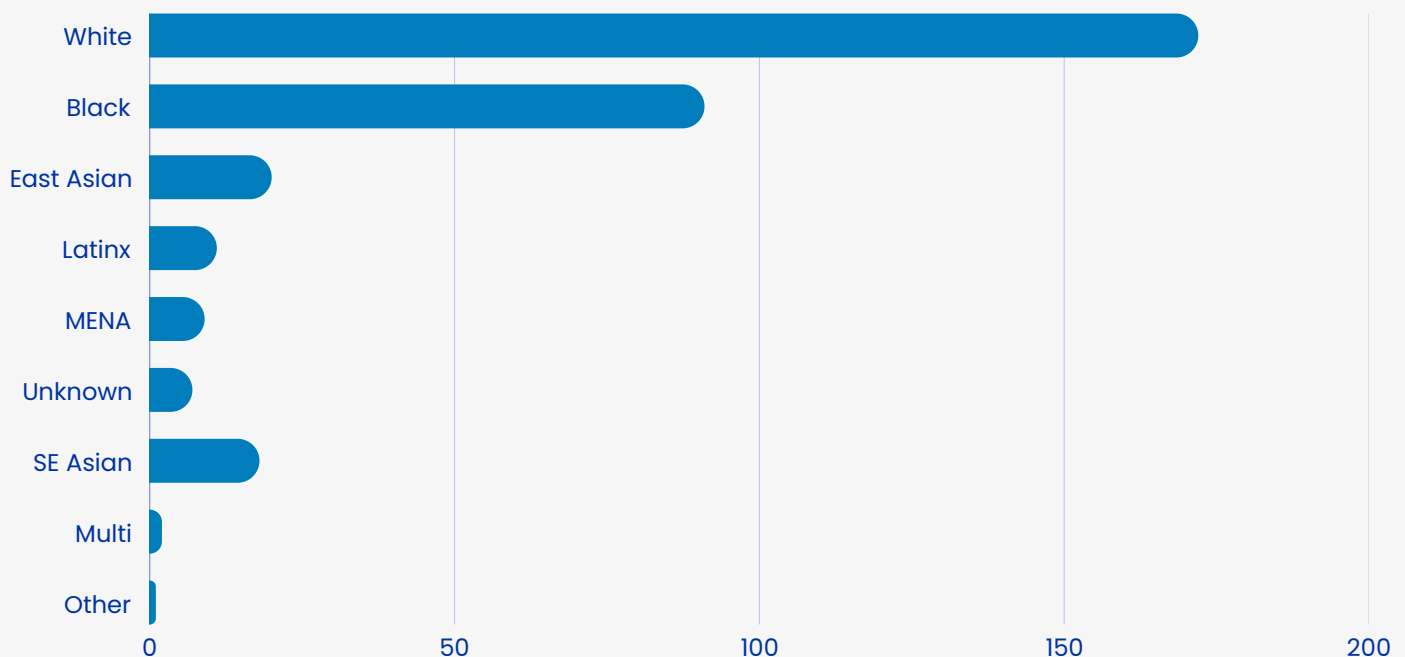


Fig. 3: Visitors by Race & Ethnicity

In the academic year 2024-2025, **51%** of our individual visitors identified as White, maintaining a similar percentage to previous years. Notably, the percentage of visitors identifying as Black or African American rose from **21%** to **27%**, continuing a trend observed last year. Additionally, the proportion of visitors identifying as East Asian increased from **5%** in 2023-2024 to **6%** in 2024-2025. Meanwhile, the percentage of visitors identifying as South Asian remained steady at **5%**, as did the percentage of Latin/Hispanic visitors at **3%**. Other demographic groups showed little change compared to previous years.

OUR VISITORS

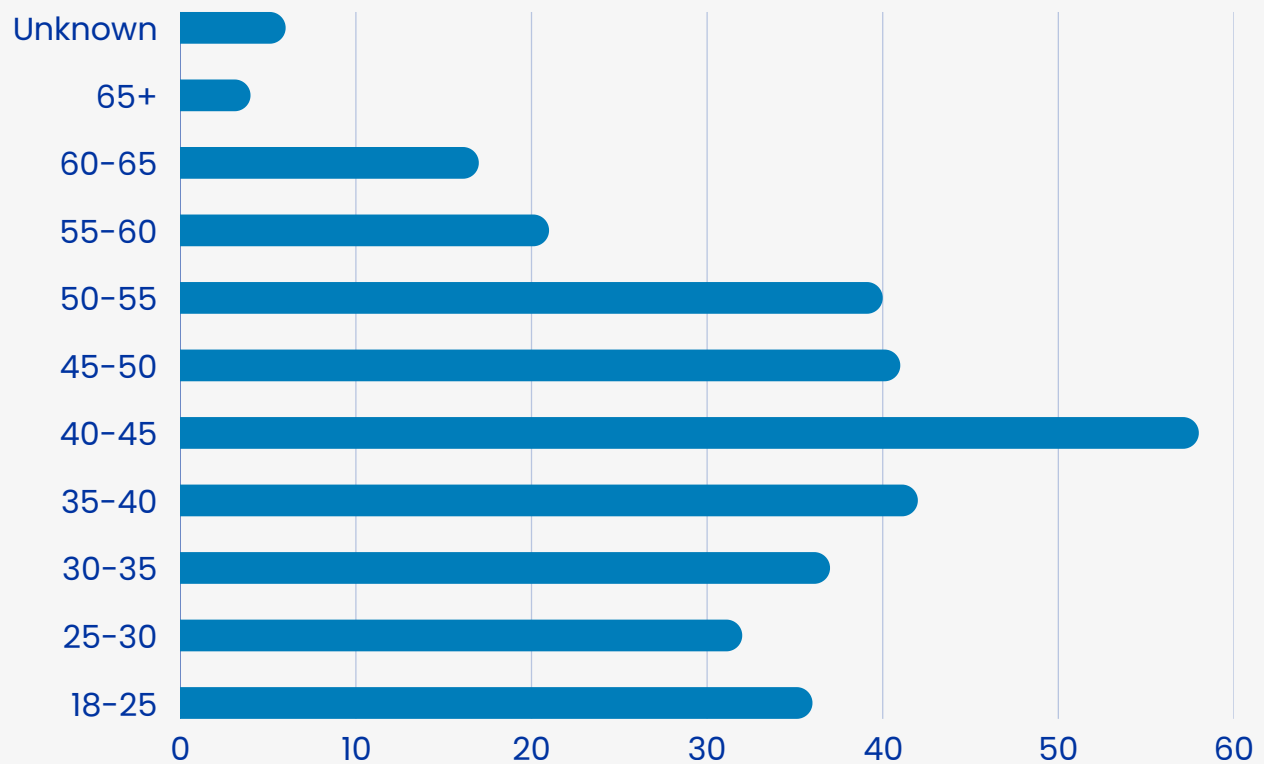


Fig. 4: Visitors by Age Range

Age Range

The Ombuds Office observed minimal changes in the visitor age group proportions between AY'23-24 and AY'24-25. The share of visitors aged 18-25 remained steady at **11%**, while those in the 25-30 age bracket also held firm at **10%**. Similarly, the proportions for visitors aged 35-40 (**13%**), 40-45 (**17%**), and 60-65 (**5%**) showed no significant variation.

A few age ranges experienced slight increases: the 50-55-year-olds rose from **10%** to **12%**, while others saw slight decreases, such as the 55-60-year-olds, dropping from **7.3%** to **6%**.

The most notable changes occurred among visitors aged 45-50, whose proportion more than **doubled**, increasing from **5.6%** in AY'23-24 to **12%** in AY'24-25. Additionally, there was a significant rise in the 30-35 age group, growing from **7.6%** in AY'23-24 to **11%** in AY'24-25.

OUR VISITORS

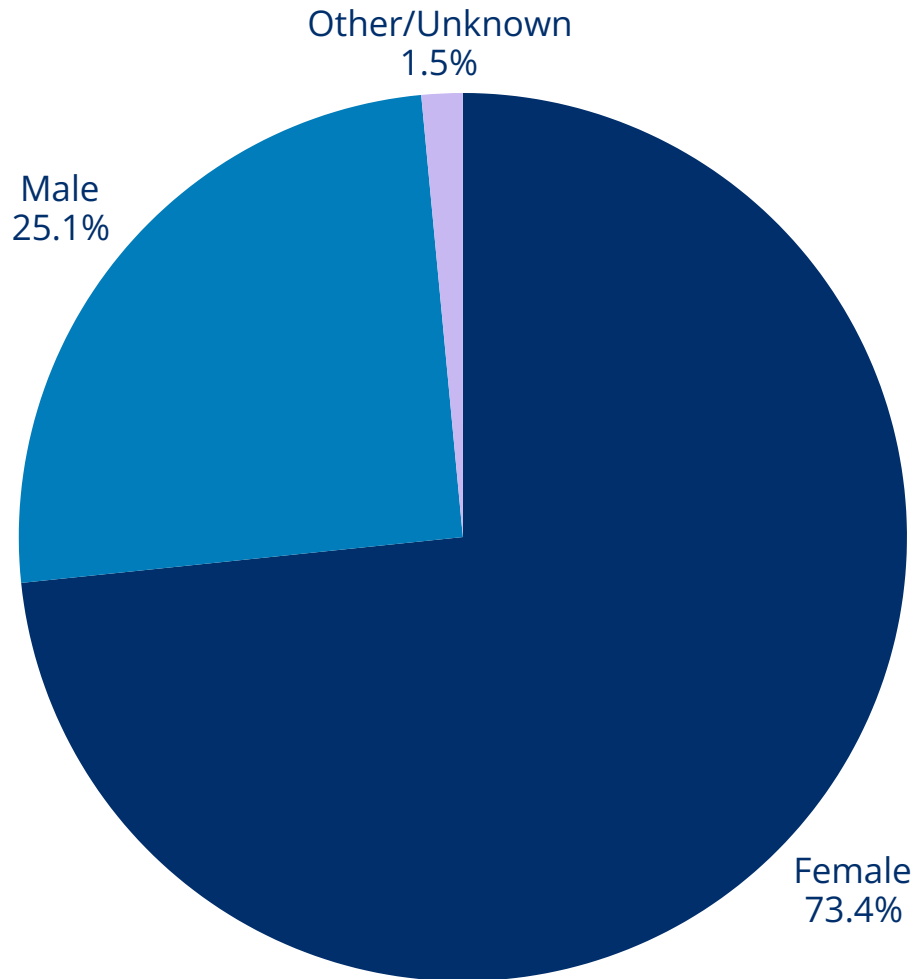


Fig. 5: Visitors by Gender

Gender

One of the most notable trends observed across six years of annual reports is the gender distribution, which remains significantly skewed towards female visitors at 73% for AY'24-25. This figure marks a small increase from AY'23-24, where female visitors accounted for 72.6%. However, it continues the longstanding trend of approximately 70% of visitors to our office identifying as female over the past six years.



CONCERNS & ISSUES

One of the key responsibilities of the Ombuds is to recognize patterns and trends in the issues raised by our visitors. This includes identifying the location of the concern, the individual it is directed toward, and how it can be articulated.

Recognition

Wellness
Scheduling
Leadership
Bias

Communication

Equity
Respect
Feedback
Job Changes

Performance



AREAS OF CONCERN

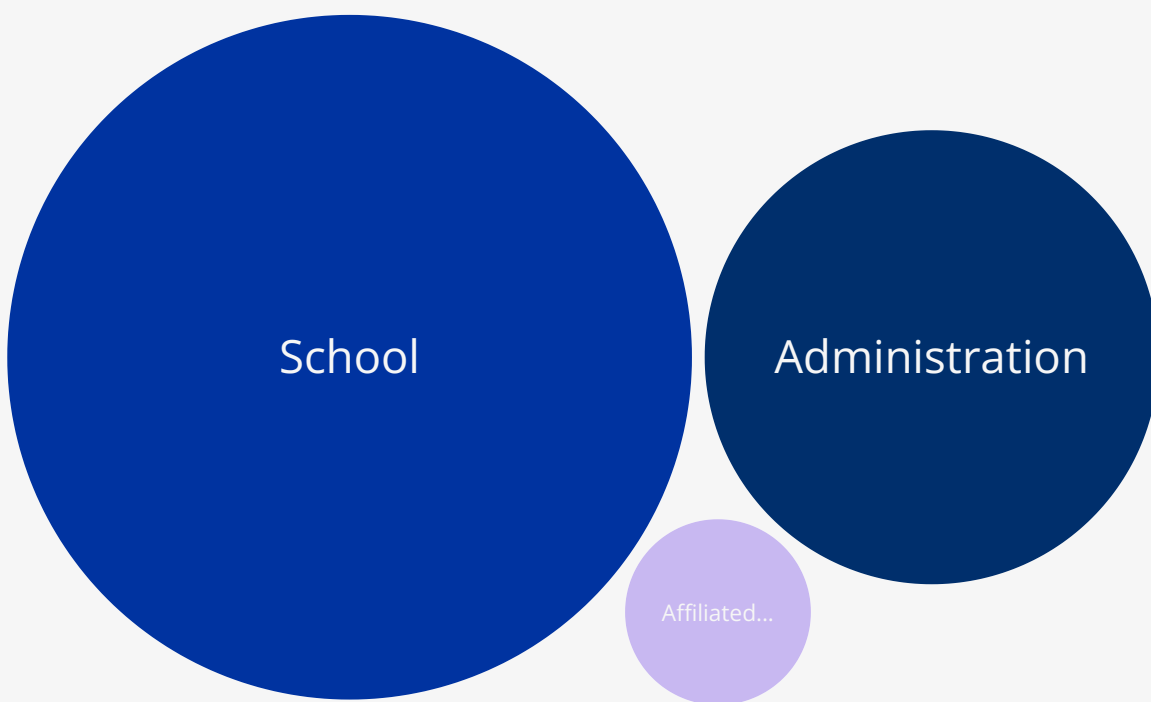


Fig. 6: Areas of Concern

Figure 6 illustrates the organizational areas of concern highlighted by visitors. A significant **72%** expressed worries regarding specific schools, while **26%** noted issues related to administrative units, and only **2%** mentioned concerns about affiliated organizations.

CONCERNS & ISSUES

Focus of Concern

We also track who or what is the object of the visitor's concern--that is, to who or what the concern is directed. We call this the concern "focus."

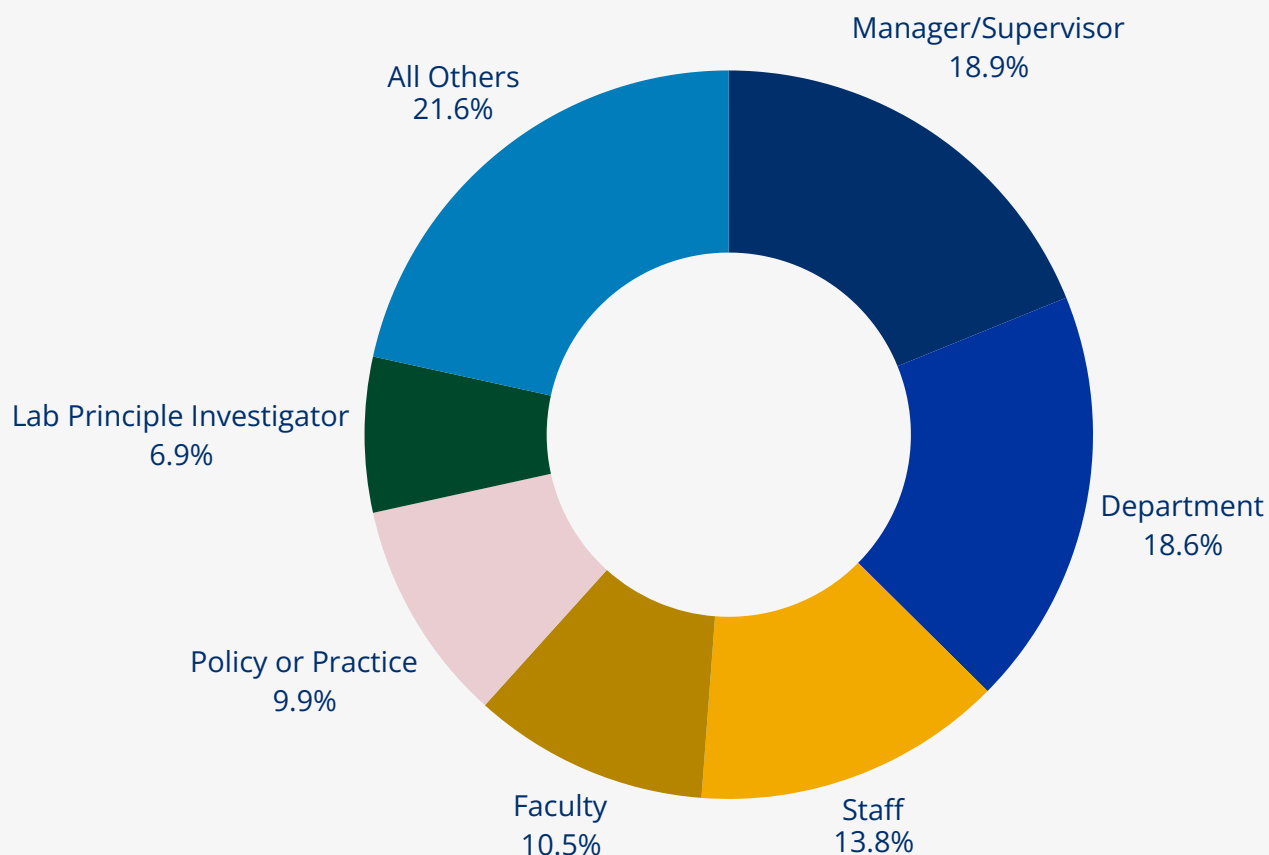


Fig. 7: Focus of Concern

As illustrated above, worries regarding "managers/supervisors" made up **19%** of the concerns, which is the same percentage for "department." Additionally, **14%** of visitors expressed concerns about "staff," while **10%** were focused on faculty and another **10%** on policies and practices. Concerns about the "lab principal investigator" accounted for **7%**. Among staff members, **30%** of their concerns were directed towards "managers/supervisors," **22%** towards their "department," and an extra **5%** towards other leadership positions, including department chairs and laboratory principal investigators.

CONCERNS & ISSUES

Tracking Concerns at Emory: A Modified Framework

At Emory, we utilize an adapted version of the “Uniform Reporting Categories” established by the International Ombuds Association to monitor various concerns. The categories we focus on include:

1. **Diversity-Related:** Issues related to equity, discrimination, and identity.
2. **Work and Career:** Matters involving job satisfaction, performance management, or employment policies at Emory.
3. **Student Life:** Non-academic concerns of students, such as housing or conduct codes.
4. **Student Academics:** Issues like the Honor Code, grade appeals, or degree progress.
5. **Faculty Life and Research:** Topics concerning research integrity, promotion and tenure, and other faculty policies.
6. **Interpersonal - Evaluative Relationships:** Concerns related to hierarchical relationship dynamics.
7. **Interpersonal - Peer/Colleague Relationships:** Issues involving non-hierarchical relationships.
8. **Safety & Legal:** Matters including alleged criminal activity, compliance, and physical safety.
9. **Health & Wellness:** Topics concerning wellbeing, student health, FMLA, etc.
10. **Organizational, Systemic, & Societal:** Issues related to large-scale organizational dynamics.
11. **Administrative, Operational, & Finance:** Matters concerning specific processes or decisions.

We monitor both “Primary” and “Secondary” concerns for each visitor, which allows us to better understand the connections among broad categories of concern. Additionally, we track sub-categories of each concern and whether a specific issue relates to any particular Emory University policy. By compiling all these categories, we gain a clearer insight into who is raising concerns and the reasons behind them.

CONCERNS & ISSUES

Primary and Secondary Concerns

As illustrated in Figure 8, the predominant category of visitors' primary concerns was Interpersonal - Evaluative Relationships. This trend has persisted over the last three years, making it our top visitor concern. The second most frequently reported primary concern among visitors was related to “Work and Career” issues.



Fig. 8: Primary Issues Reported

CONCERNS & ISSUES

These categories were also the top two categories raised as secondary concerns (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9: Secondary Issues Reported

Analyzing these figures in greater depth reveals a strong interconnection between the categories. Specifically, 18% of visitors primarily concerned with “Interpersonal - Evaluative Relationships” also expressed concerns about “Work and Career” (see Figure 10(A)). Conversely, 29% of visitors who highlighted “Work and Career” as their primary concern also mentioned “Evaluative Relationship” issues as secondary (refer to Figure 10(B)). In total, 56% of all visitors addressed either “Interpersonal - Evaluative Relationships” or “Work and Career” concerns—whether primary or secondary—with 10% raising both types of issues.

CONCERNS & ISSUES

Linking Primary and Secondary Concerns

The link between these two categories becomes most evident when examining the staff's feedback. **59%** of staff identified either “Evaluative Relationship” or “Work and Career” as their primary concern, while **52%** highlighted one of these categories as a secondary concern. When we combine these figures, it reveals that **96%** of staff mentioned “Evaluative Relationship” or “Work and Career” as either a primary or secondary concern, with **16%** indicating both, with one being their primary focus. This represents a significant correlation compared to other categories we track.

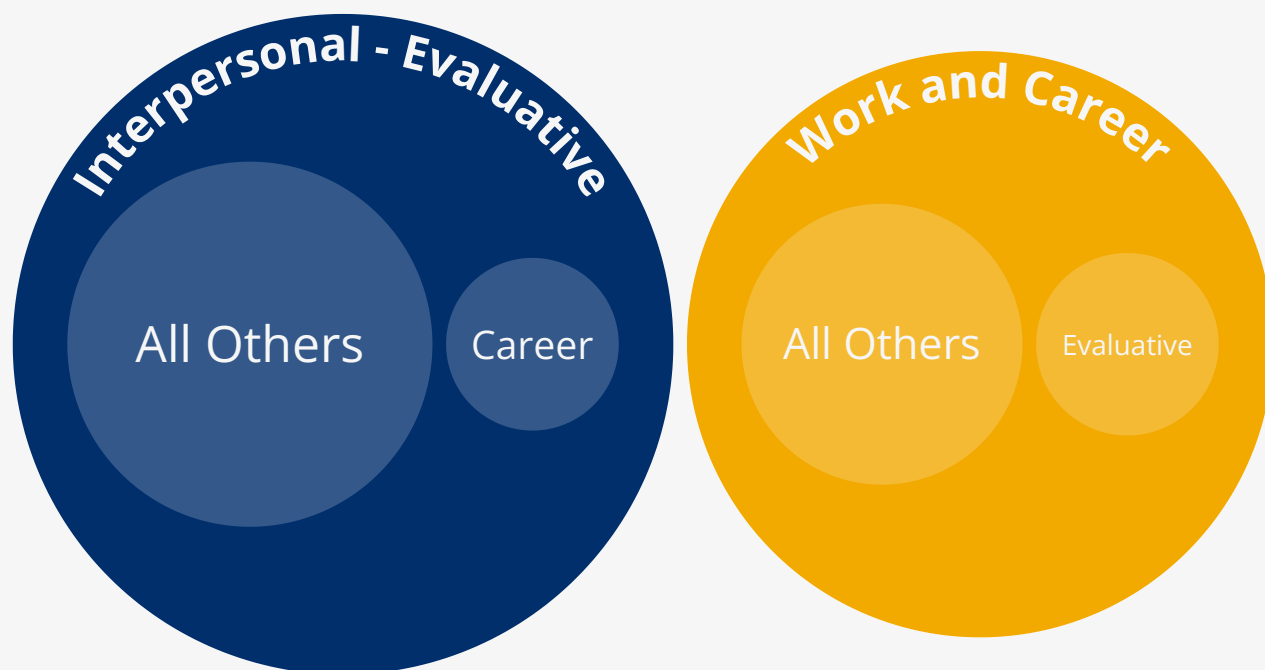


Fig. 10: Interrelation of “Evaluative” and “Career” Concerns among Staff

CONCERNS & ISSUES

We emphasize that correlation does not imply causation. It seems just as possible that strains on Evaluative Relationships could lead to “Work and Career” issues, or vice versa, or that both categories may be influenced by another variable instead of being directly related to each other. However, this finding indicates that, at the very least, the link between these two categories warrants further investigation, as there may be opportunities to address both areas of concern. Additionally, we observe that this scenario closely aligns with the percentage of staff who expressed their concerns to either managers, leadership, or their overall department (56%), indicating that the majority of these concerns were communicated “upward” rather than the reverse.

Sub-Categories of Concern

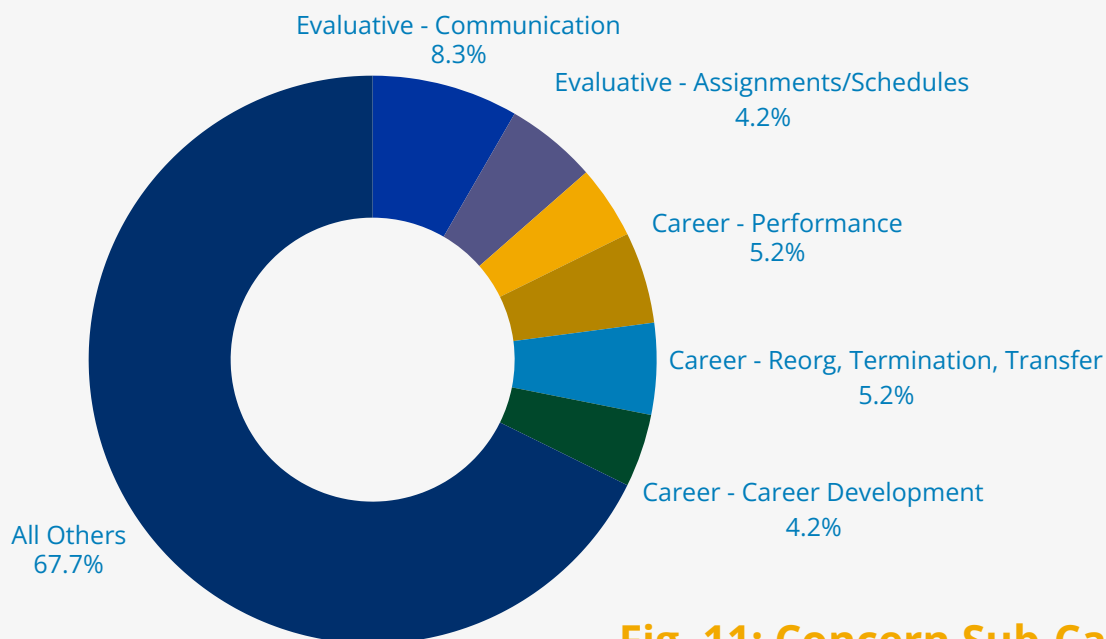


Fig. 11: Concern Sub-Categories

The top 7 sub-categories of concerns account for 36% of all reported issues. The leading sub-category was Interpersonal - Evaluative (Communication), comprising 8% of the total. Additionally, the combined categories of Work and Career (Role, Performance, and Conduct), Interpersonal - Evaluative (Supervisory Effectiveness), and Work and Career (Reorg, Termination, and Transfer) constituted 15% of all issues, with each representing 5%.



HOW WE SERVE

The Ombuds works with both individuals and groups to address their concerns or guide them to appropriate resources.

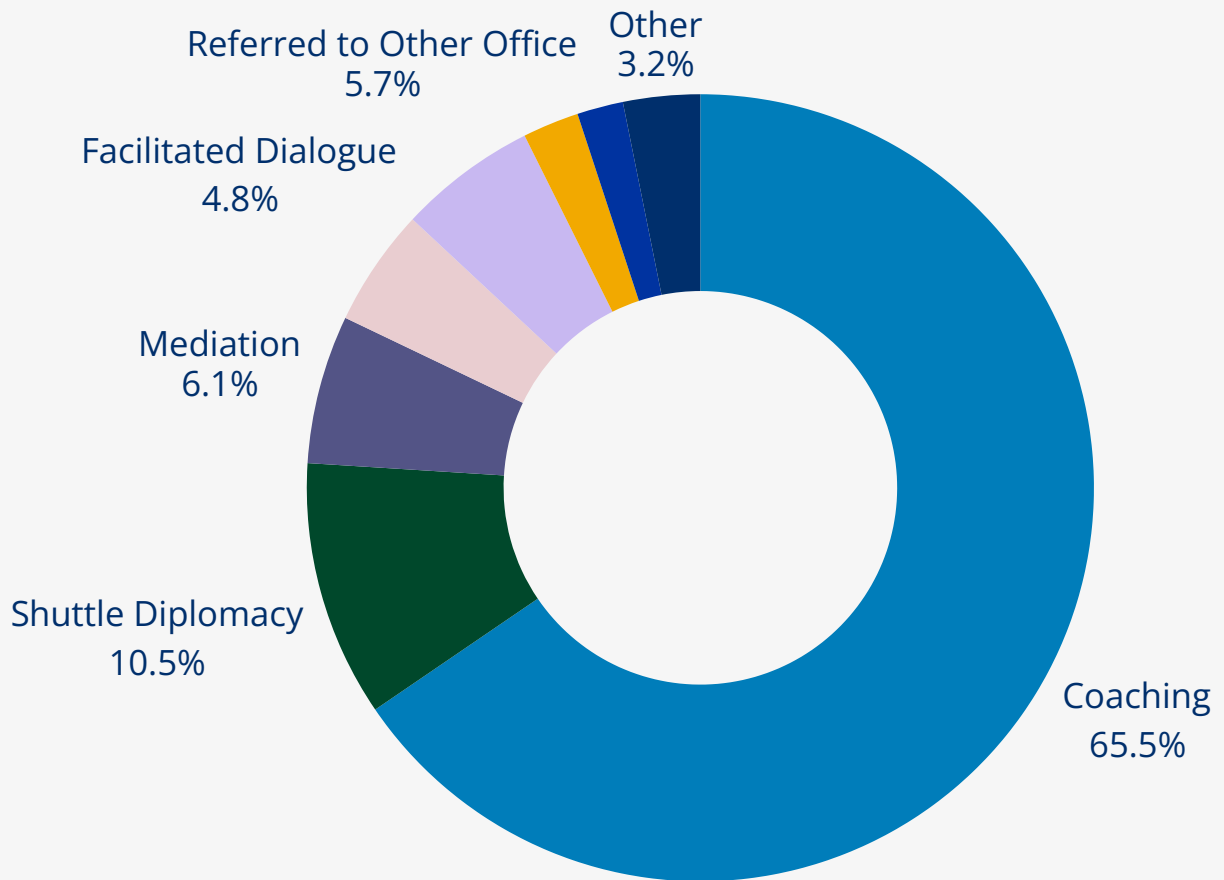


Fig. 12: Focus of Concern

The leading two services offered to individuals this year were Coaching and Shuttle Diplomacy, which collectively accounted for 76% of all individual services (refer to Figure 12). Coaching was conducted 311 times, representing 66% of the total cases. We facilitated Shuttle Diplomacy with individual parties 50 times, which comprised 11% of the individual services.

Additionally, we engaged 235 individuals through large group listening sessions and another 120 in larger facilitated discussions.

THANK YOU

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