



Dear Provost Scholz,

We are pleased to submit the Annual Report of the UW-Madison Ombuds Office for the Academic Year 2020-21. It has been a busy year as we continue to serve the Campus as a confidential, non-formal, neutral, and independent resource for all university employees.

The Ombuds Office saw 268 cases in AY20-21 with 273 Visitors. This is the largest annual number of cases our office has recorded and is consistent with the gradual increase over the recent past. As we did last year, our report includes an estimate of the time we spent on individual cases since we view this as the most meaningful quantitative measure of our direct involvement with Visitors. The median amount of time per Visitor increased about half an hour to 2.5 hours. (The mean increased less since there was one extreme case last year that skewed the mean.) In part, we attribute this increase to the fact that many of our cases were more complicated than in the past (partly due to COVID). Also, we are joining Visitors in pre-disciplinary and HIB investigation meetings/hearings — as observers — more frequently. We are finding this very beneficial in that this tends to increase the professionalism of the meetings/hearings and enables us to gain some added perspective on the situation which allows us to provide our Visitors with better options.

As in previous years, Academic Staff dominated our caseload (51%). This was followed by University Staff and tenured Faculty, each with 14%.

In AY20-21, 64% of cases were related to Evaluative Relationships, consistent with the last couple of years. We continue to believe that there is a need to significantly improve the skills of employees in supervisory positions in all parts of the campus. Details on specific aspects of evaluative relationships mentioned by Visitors are presented on page 7 using subcategories developed by the International Ombuds Association (IOA). Most often mentioned were respect/treatment, supervisory effectiveness, and communication.

There was a surprising increase in the number of cases in the IOA category of Services/Administrative Issues from 12 cases in the previous year to 32 this year. From our analyses, there is a wide range in the types of these cases (and the units from which they arise) including budget matters, inability to make timely decisions, and inconsistent messaging. Some of this is probably related to difficulties surrounding Covid and return-to-work issues.

For 19% of our Visitors, Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (HIB) was an issue. This is a notable *decrease* from last year. Informal communications with other Campus offices (like EAO) suggest that our experience is consistent with that of others. Part of this likely stems from reduced direct interpersonal interaction due to the lessened face-to-face contact because of

Covid. Some may also be due to the greater awareness of HIB issues across Campus and slightly increased vigilance. (We wish to add that, in examining our own data more carefully, we found large differences among individual Ombuds in deciding whether a case was indeed HIB. We are instituting procedures to ensure greater consistency in the future.)

Of those Visitors who reported HIB issues, the proportions in the various categories (staff type, years of service, etc.) were comparable to the overall proportions. We remain concerned about the fairness of HIB investigations, principally those performed by HR personnel within the same unit as the individuals involved in the HIB “dispute.” One member of our team, Gery Essenmacher, is participating in a committee of various Campus leaders, analyzing the impact of the HIB policy since its implementation.

One other change from previous years is the notable increase in the proportion of cases for which the Ombuds “referred Visitors to Campus/Community resources” and “consulted with other parties.” This is consistent with our belief that many of our cases are becoming more complex. Some of this is also reflected in the increase in median time spent with the Visitors and the large increase in cases in the IOA category of Services/Administrative Issues.

As already noted, Covid appears to have had a notable effect on our Visitors’ issues. This includes substantial concern about “return-to-work” issues. Other factors impacting our activities include the change in payrolling and the TTC process. We have actually seen fewer Visitors concerned with TTC than we expected, although, this seems to be picking up as we compose this letter.

The pandemic continues to affect our practice in some significant ways. We had to move our office from the Lowell Center to the Extension Building although we will be moving back to Lowell for the coming academic year. Almost all of our weekly team meetings have been virtual since early spring 2020. With very few exceptions, all of our Visitors meet with us either by phone or virtually. The number of outreach activities (working with partner units and offices to get our services promoted) decreased this past year. As activities return to campus, the Ombuds team will look at ways to re-engage in former outreach activities as well as identify new opportunities. Also, we have designed a new orientation process for newly appointed Ombuds that we offered virtually in 2020 and in-person this past June 2021. This replaced training at an annual regional conference canceled due to Covid. We intend to utilize regional conferences in the future but will maintain substantial portions of our orientation process.

Looking to the future, we anticipate similar patterns in the coming year. Return-to-work and TTC issues will likely increase (at least for the near future). Clearly there remains much uncertainty about the progress of the pandemic. As noted earlier, improved training of supervisors is a high priority, and we will continue to work with others to explore how this can best be accomplished.

We intend to continue expanding our communications with other offices around Campus that are concerned with the well-being of Campus employees. In addition to participating in the HIB working team, Rick Nordheim is serving on a campus-wide TTC work group, Lezli Redmond is our liaison with the Office of Strategic Consulting, Bruno Browning as the liaison with DDEA,

and Jane Dymond is the liaison with the SMPH Diversity and Inclusion Advocates Program. We are also working with John Horn, chief of staff for the VCFA, in an effort to offer more support for employees in departments and units within that office, in particular focusing on expanding our work with University Staff employees.

The entire Ombuds team looks forward to meeting with you later this month. We will be introducing you to our new Ombuds, Bruno Browning and Jane Dymond, and discussing this report and the continuing work of the Ombuds Office.

Respectfully submitted,

The Ombuds Team: Mike Ashmore, Rick Nordheim, Gery Essenmacher  
Lezli Redmond, Bruno Browning, Jane Dymond

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cc: Eden Inoway-Ronnie, Beth Meyerand, Jennifer Noyes

## The Data

<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>Years Employed</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<b>Total # Visitors</b>	<b>273</b>	<= 5	102 (38)
(4 cases had multiple visitors)		> 5	155 (58)
Contacts with non-response	3	Unknown	11 (4)
<b>Total Contacts</b>	<b>271</b>		

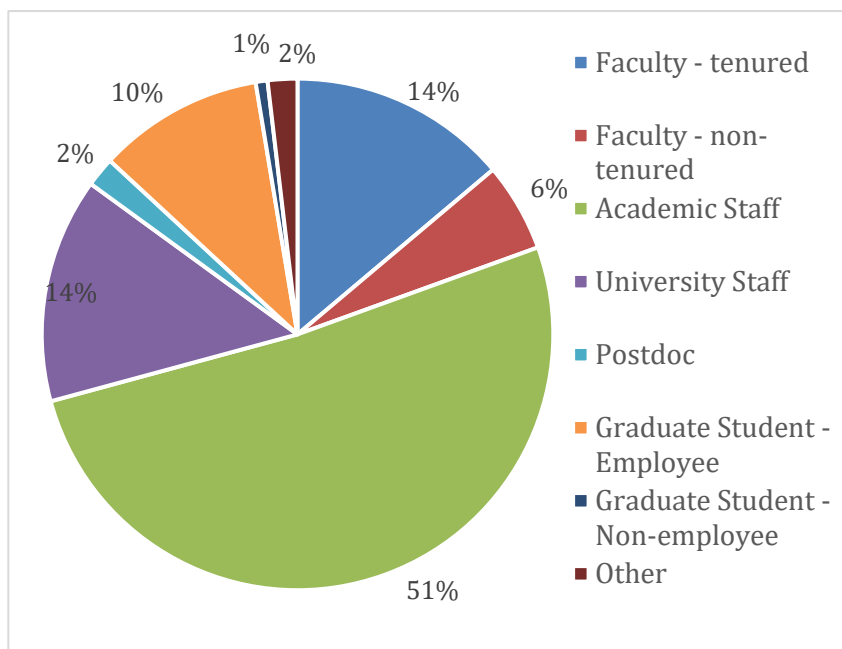
<b>Primary Topics</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>(%)</b>
more than one topic can be noted on a case		
HIB	52	(20)
AD/Disability	16	(6)
Gender	16	(6)
Ethnicity	18	(7)

<b>Action / Impact</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Provide information, feedback, Perspective	240	(90)
Refer to campus/community resource	187	(70)
Consult with other parties	42	(16)
Provide information only	23	(9)
Other	3	(1)

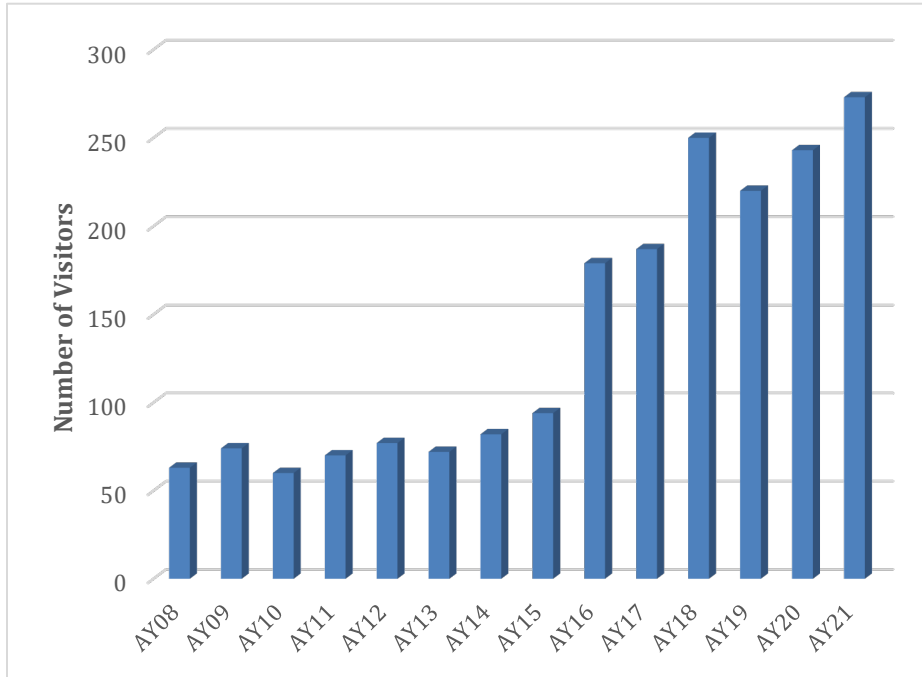
Number of cases for which action was noted followed by % of cases; more than one topic can be noted

## Who Was Served?

<b>Position</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Academic Staff	137	51%
University Staff	38	14%
Faculty (tenured)	38	14%
Grad Student Employee	28	10%
Faculty non-tenured	15	6%
Postdoc	5	2%
Grad Student Non-Employee	2	1%
Undergrad Employee	0	0%
Other or Unknown	5	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>268</b>	



### Annual Number of Visitors History

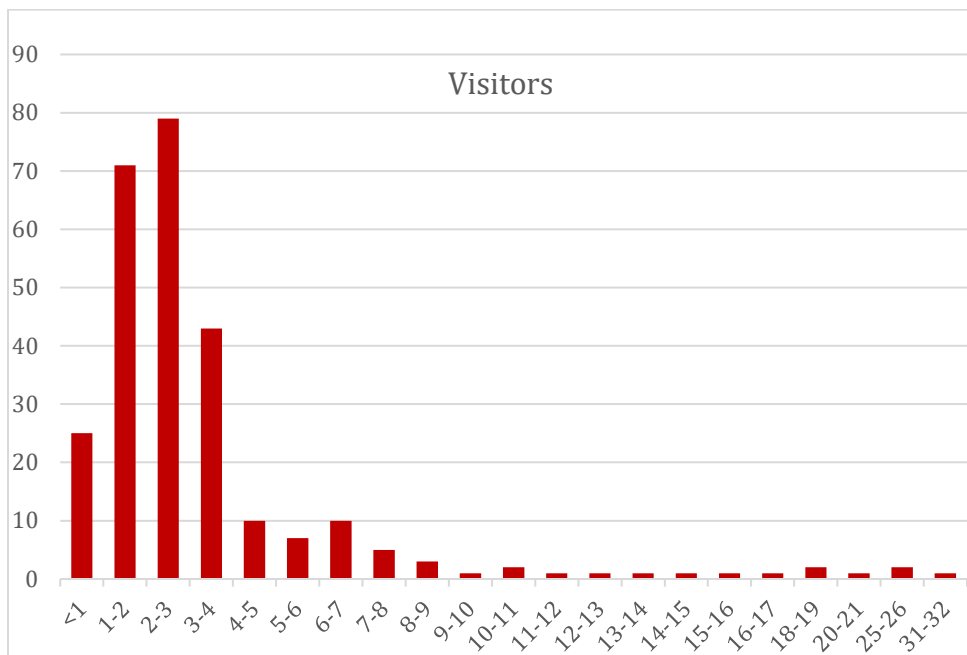


### Time Spent with Visitors

Since “interaction” with Visitors consists of meetings (either face-to-face or virtual), phone calls, and email exchanges (often brief but ongoing), it is not possible to count the number of meetings. Instead, the Ombuds have been recording the amount of time they spend with Visitors. Given here is an enumeration of time spent for the 268 cases reported during the academic year 2020-21.

The median is around 2.5 hours

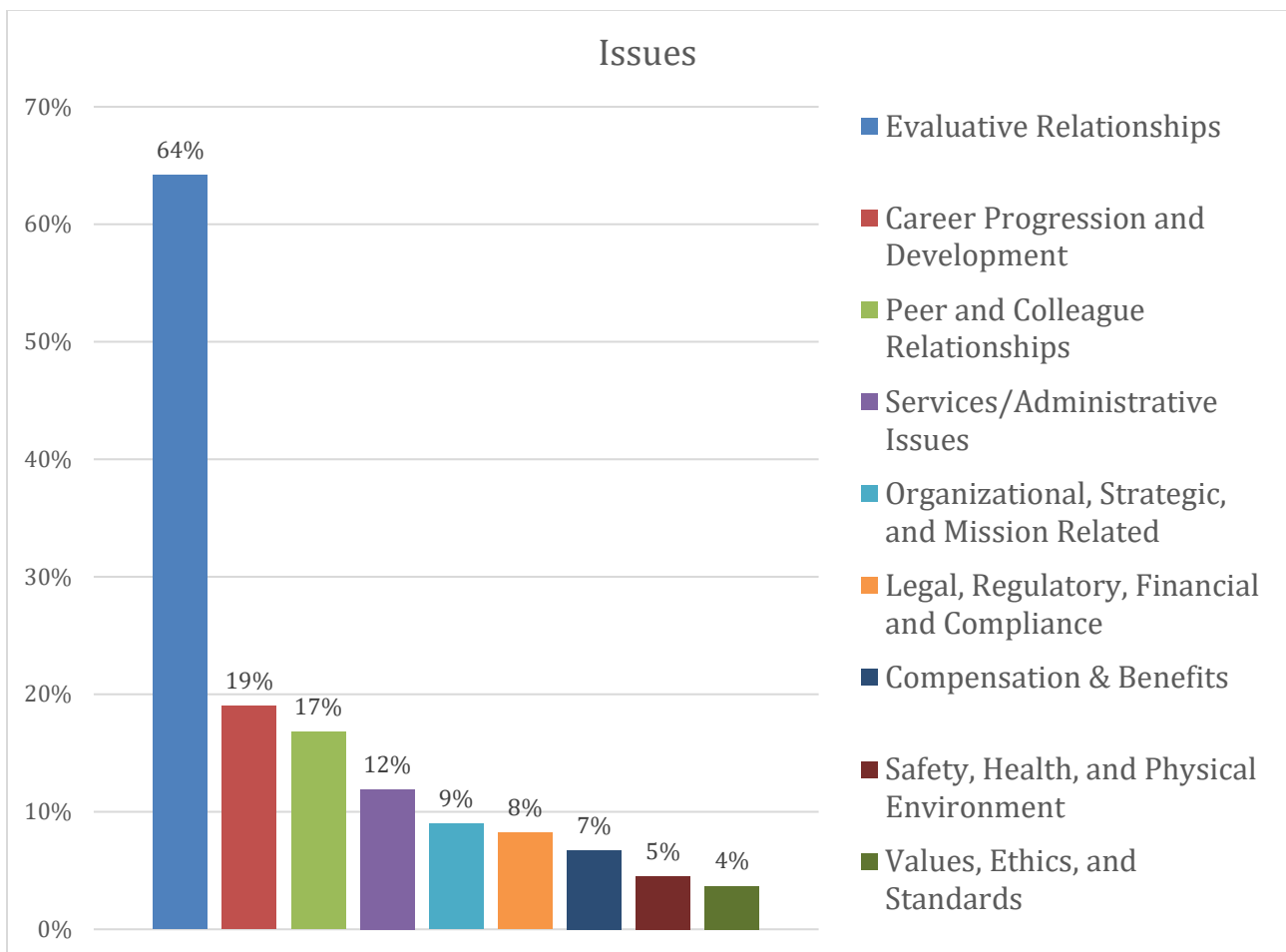
The mean is around 3.5 hours



## What Were the Issues

Note: Based on International Ombudsman Association (IOA) categories. More than one category can be noted for each case )

Issues	Number	Percent
Evaluative Relationships	172	64%
Career Progression and Development	51	19%
Peer and Colleague Relationships	45	17%
Services/Administrative Issues	32	12%
Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	24	9%
Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	22	8%
Compensation & Benefits	18	7%
Safety, Health, and Physical Environment	12	5%
Values, Ethics, and Standards	10	4%



Each of the Uniform Reporting Categories from the International Ombudsman Association has a number of subcategories. Below are listed all IOA subcategories recorded for 20 or more cases

<b>Evaluative Relationships</b>	<b>Number</b>
• Respect / Treatment	53
• Supervisory Effectiveness	45
• Communication	40
• Performance Appraisal / Grading	30
• Assignments / Schedules	27
• Departmental Climate	26
• Bullying, Mobbing	20

<b>Peer and Colleague Relationships</b>	<b>Number</b>
• Respect / Treatment	22

<b>Services/Administrative Issues.</b>	<b>Number</b>
• Administrative Decisions	20

## AY 2020-2021 Ombuds Outreach Activities

John Horn	VCFA	7/15/2020
Anne Mekschun & Hope Broadus	SMPH	8/5/2020
Megan Dzuba, Craig Hubbell	OHR	8/9/2020
Sherry Boeger and others	OEA	8/12/2020
Chairs & directors (L&S) lunch	Annual	8/25/2020
Graduate Student (Incoming) Fair	Annual	8/26/2020
Karl Martin & others	Extension	8/26/2020
Compliance Team (8 people)		9/16/2020
Grad Assistant E&D - Fall	Luis Pinero	10/1/2020
HR Employee Benefits Fair	Annual	10/1/2020
Provost - Annual meeting/report	Annual	10/16/2020
April McHugh & Elizabeth Schrimpf	Continuing St	10/19/2020
Jake Smith	SoAS	11/4/2020
Acad Staff Assembly		11/9/2020
Patrick Sheehan	OHR	12/2/2020
Craig Fischer	Legal Services	12/16/2020
Beth Meyerand	VPFS	1/20/2021
Grad Assistant E&D - Spring	Luis Pinero	3/1/2021
Alyson Pohlman, Office of Strategic Consulting		3/31/2021
Cheryl Gittens	DDEEA	4/28/2021
Employee Assistance Office		5/26/2021