



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON OMBUDS PROGRAM

FY20 Annual Report

2019/2020

PREPARED BY

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CONTRIBUTIONS BY

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OMBUDS PROGRAM

University of Oregon

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ABOUT THE OMBUDS PROGRAM

Confidential

Impartial

Independent

Informal

Services

The Ombuds Program (OP) provides comprehensive conflict resolution services including a range of services for individual and group concerns, training and workshops on communication and conflict topics, and identification and upward feedback of systemic concerns.

The OP offers a distinct service in that it is the only campus resource providing confidential, independent, impartial, and informal services for students and employees.

Standards of Practice

The OP adheres to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) standards of practice, code of ethics, and best practices. The OP also upholds and promotes the vision, mission, and core values of the University of Oregon.

Individual Services Include:

Professional Consultation (including resource referral and guidance on university policies and processes)
Conflict Coaching
Dispute Resolution (including mediation and facilitation)

Group Services Include:

Group Facilitation
Group Conflict Assessments
Training and Workshops
Neutral Observer

PROGRAM MISSION

The OP strives to provide effective conflict resolution and prevention services with the overarching goals of protecting fairness and promoting respect for all campus constituents.



OUR TEAM



Brett Hathaway Harris, University Ombudsperson

Brett Hathaway Harris joined the University of Oregon in 2016 from the University of Mississippi where she established the university's first ombuds program and served as ombuds. Brett holds a J.D. from the University of Idaho College of Law with a degree emphasis in Native American law. Prior to work in higher education, she served as a contract ombuds and provided dispute resolution services through private practice, directed a court mediation program, and worked in employment law. Brett is a member of the International Ombudsman Association and currently serves on the IOA D/E/I Task Force.



Becky Couch, Program Administrator

Becky Couch has been at the UO since 1997 and has worked extensively providing administrative services at senior levels, including working previously in the Office of the President and the Office of Government and Community Relations. Becky earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees at the UO. In addition to her work at the university, she served for six years on the Lane County Human Rights Advisory Committee. She manages the ombuds office intake processes, calendar, administrative and trends tracking systems, and appointment triage.



Keegan Cary, FY20/FY21 Ombuds Case Assistant

Keegan Cary joined the ombuds program in 2020. Keegan holds a BA in history from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Currently, Keegan is pursuing her master's of science in conflict and dispute resolution at the University of Oregon. She has training in basic mediation, collaborative governance, and domestic relations mediation.

Farewell and Thank You to Associate Ombuds, Jenn Hudson

Jenn Hudson, previously Associate Ombuds and Director of the Student Conflict Resolution Center, left the university in June 2020 to pursue other interests. Ms. Hudson was a valuable resource to the campus community during her time here, providing training, consultation, and dispute resolution services. We wish to express our sincere gratitude for her many contributions. Cases have been transitioned to our university ombudsperson and future inquiries for training and services related to student dispute resolution can be directed to the general ombuds email at ombuds@uoregon.edu.

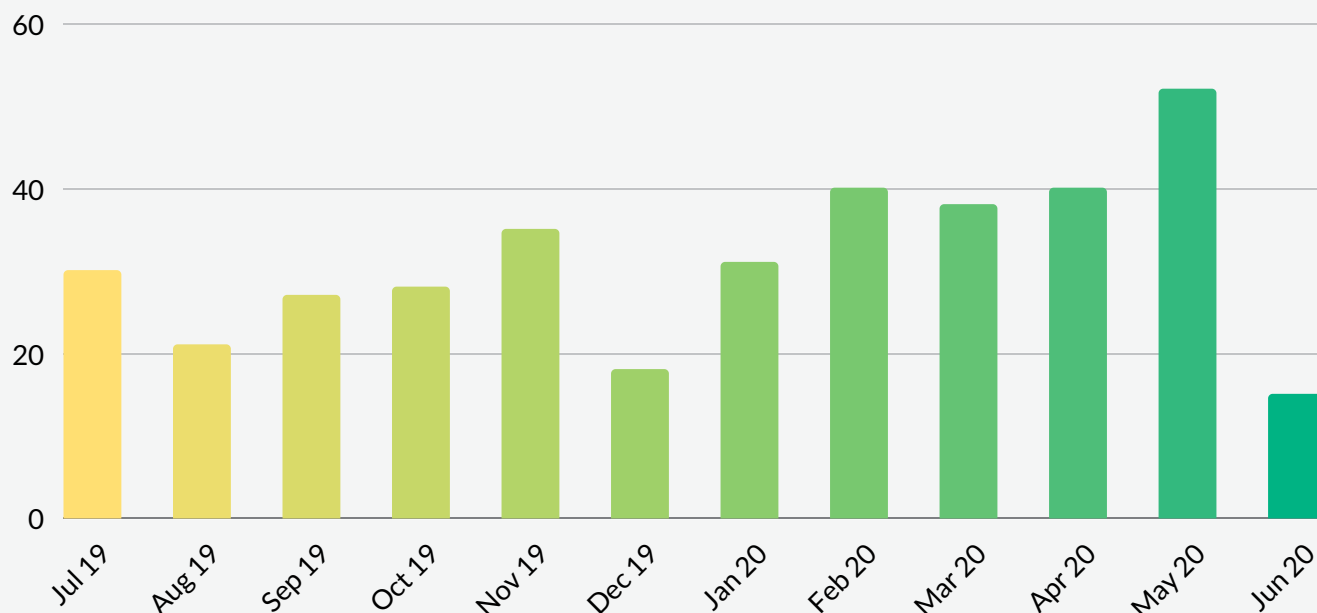
CASE DATA

375 CASES

In the 2020 fiscal year, the OP handled 375 total cases consisting of 943 separate concerns/issues. 622 visitors sought out program services in FY20 and over 150 additional members of the campus community participated in dispute resolution processes at the request of visitors.

943 CONCERNS

NEW CASES BY MONTH



Notes and Terminology

As an informal and confidential resource, the OP does not keep records of specific cases. However, in order to report on work and provide data that may be useful to campus partners and leadership, the OP provides non-identifiable aggregate case data.

A case is described by this office as a distinct matter brought for the purpose of dispute resolution assistance, coaching, consultation, and/or systemic complaint tracking. A case may contain one or many concerns/issues, and may include one visitor or numerous visitors who share the same concern(s).

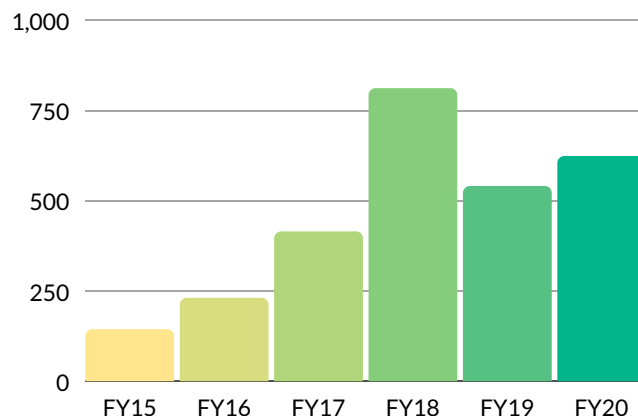
CASES BY VISITOR AFFILIATION

622 VISITORS

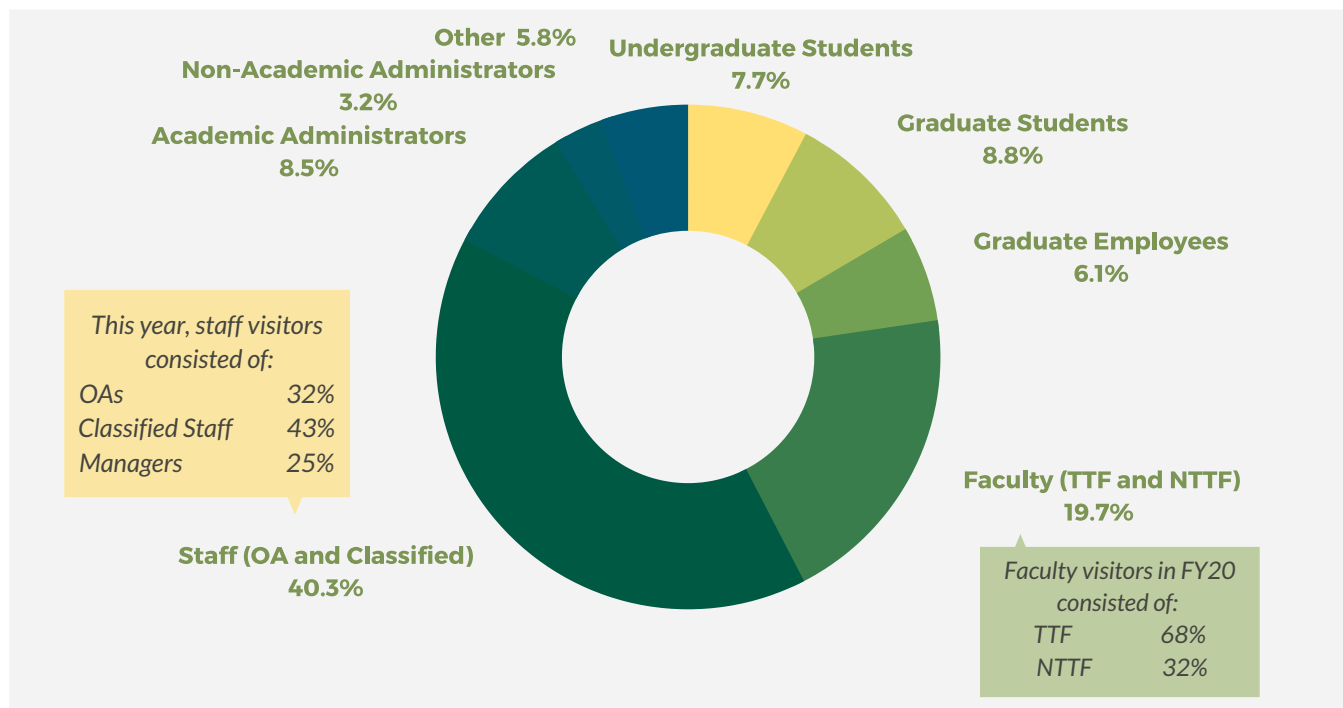
One way the OP identifies trends in concerns is by tracking the constituency/affiliation of visitors.* 622 visitors utilized OP services in FY20.

*A visitor is anyone who initiates contact with the OP for purposes of seeking services. Many ombuds use the term visitor rather than complainant or client so as to distinguish the nature of ombuds services from counseling and legal services.

NUMBER OF VISITORS YEAR BY YEAR



The above graph shows the number of visitors each year since the University of Oregon's Ombuds Program was established in 2014.



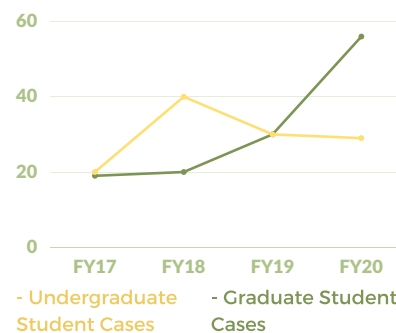
VISITOR TRENDS

The most significant change in visitors this year occurred in graduate student cases, nearly doubling from 7.8% in FY19 to 14.9% of total cases in FY20.* This increase was possibly a result of dedicated outreach efforts to raise student awareness of available OP services.

Faculty cases decreased from 25.6% to 19.7% of total cases in FY20. Staff cases increased from 35.4% to 40.3% of total cases in FY20.

*In FY20, the OP began tracking graduate student concerns and graduate employee concerns separately; previous years' reports combined these into the general 'graduate student' visitor category.

STUDENT CASES YEAR BY YEAR

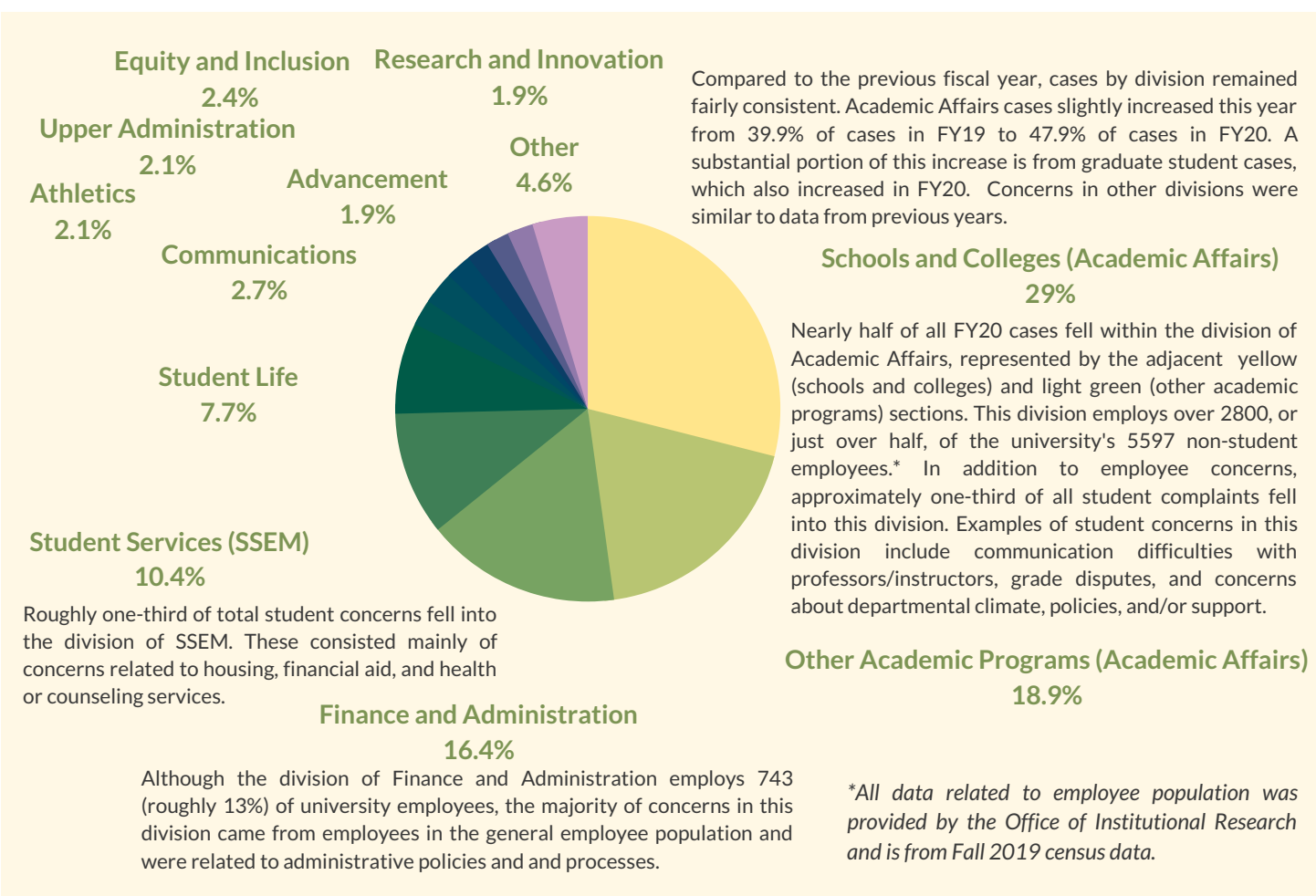




FY20

CASES BY DIVISION

The OP tracks concerns according to division as one way of identifying localized trends. Cases are assigned to divisions based on the details of the concern. For example, a concern about the availability of university benefits would be assigned to Finance and Administration, whereas a concern regarding the application or administration of benefits within a department would be assigned to that specific department.



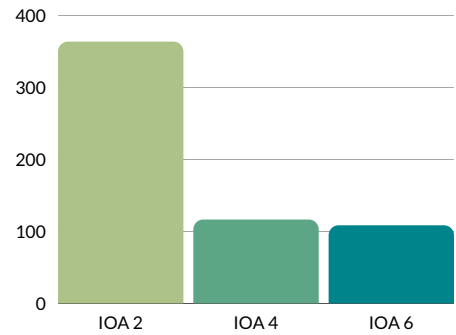
FY20

CONCERNS BY BROAD CATEGORY

943 CONCERNS

The OP utilizes the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) categories to track concerns and identify localized and systemic trends. These consist of nine broad categories containing over 80 subcategories. The broad concern categories with the leading number of concerns this fiscal year are represented in the adjacent table. The chart below represents total concerns by broad IOA category.

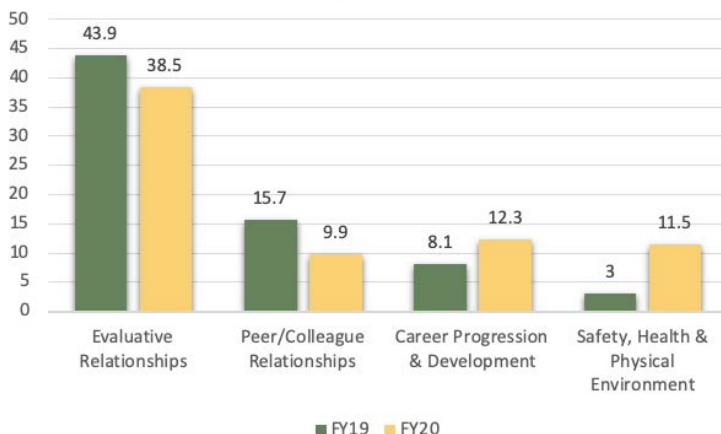
FY20 LEADING CONCERNS BY BROAD CATEGORY



IOA 2: Evaluative Relationships
IOA 4: Career Progression & Development
IOA 6: Safety, Health & Physical Environment



TOP CONCERNS FY19 AND FY20
Shown by percentage of total annual concerns



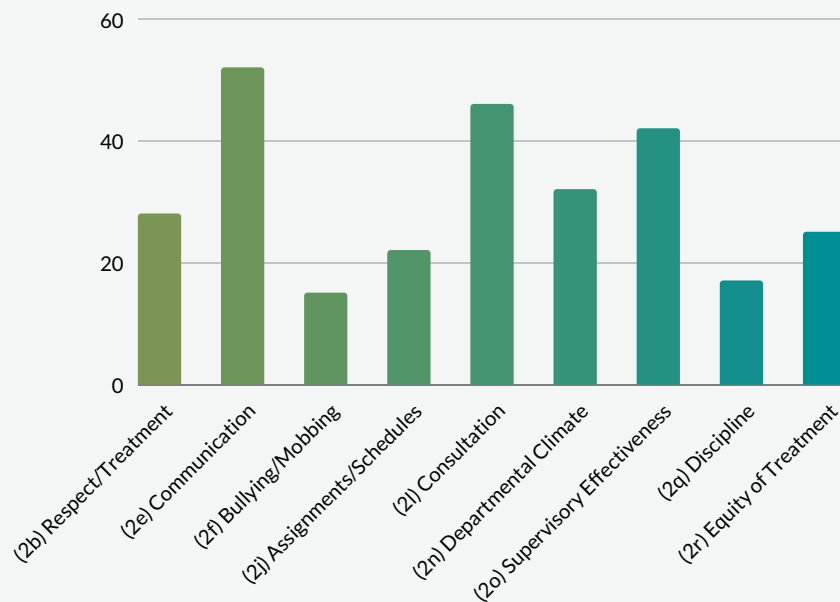
TOP CONCERN CATEGORIES YEAR BY YEAR

2020's COVID-19 pandemic and widespread concern over civil rights had significant impact and is reflected in this year's case data. Cases related to job security, telework, safety of work environment, and climate related to civil rights concerns all increased compared with previous years. As a result, the broad categories 'Safety, Health & Physical Environment' and 'Career Progression & Development' joined 'Evaluative Relationships' as the leading broad concern categories this year.

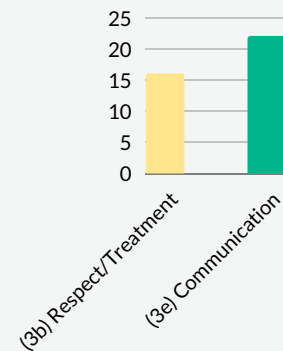
PREDOMINANT CONCERNS BY SUBCATEGORY

943 CONCERNS

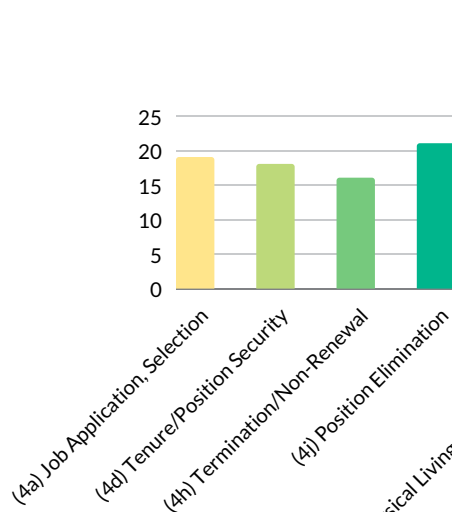
Whereas broad categories indicate the general type of complaint (for example, IOA broad category (2) denotes conflict in an evaluative/hierarchical relationship), subcategories provide more detailed information about the nature of concerns. The series of charts below show IOA subcategories with highest number of concerns in the 2020 fiscal year, grouped into charts based on broad categories (noted below each chart).



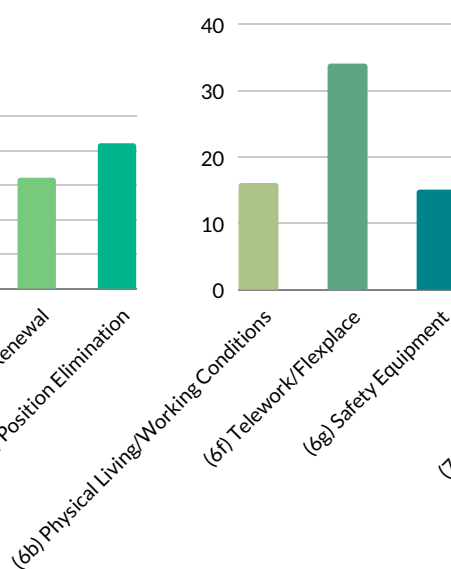
(2) EVALUATIVE RELATIONSHIPS



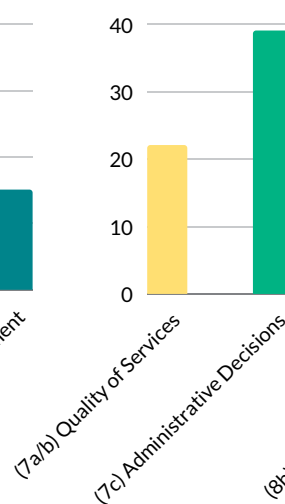
(3) PEER & COLLEAGUE RELATIONSHIPS



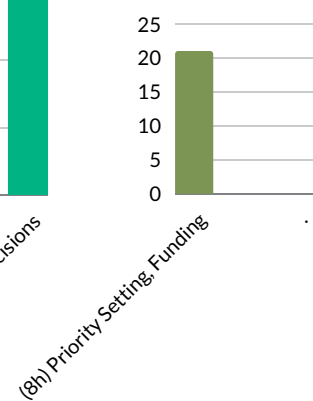
(4) CAREER PROGRESSION
& DEVELOPMENT



(6) SAFETY, HEALTH & PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT



(7) SERVICES/ADMINISTRATIVE
ISSUES

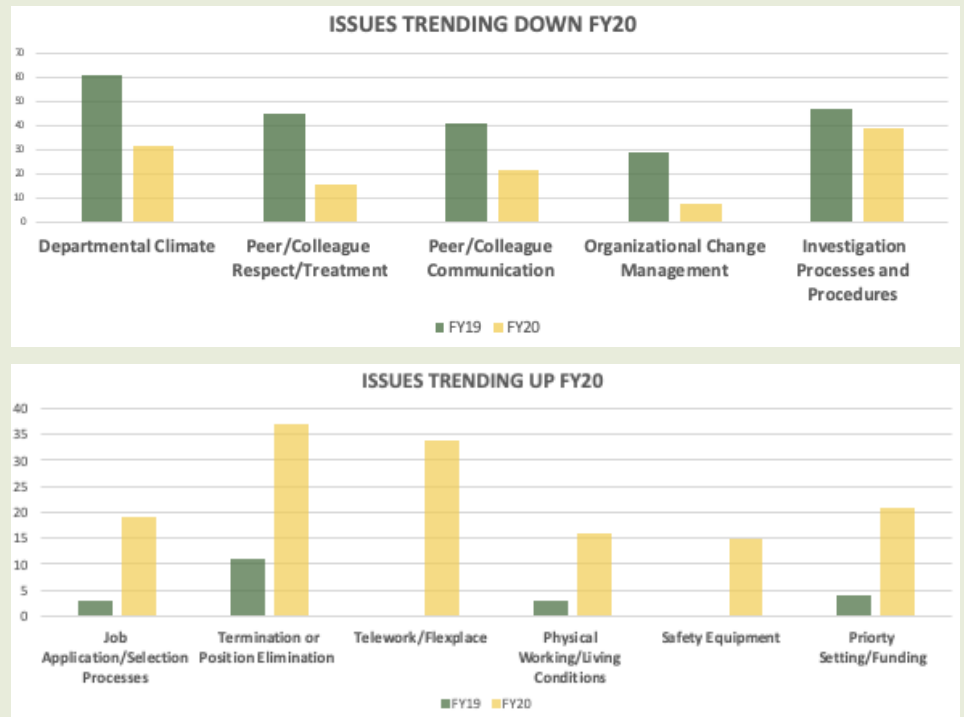


(8) ORGANIZATION,
STRATEGIC,
& MISSION-RELATED

FY20

TRENDS

The adjacent charts show issues trending campus-wide in FY20 according to subcategories. Most issues trending up were directly related to COVID-19 (all those listed except 'Job Application/Selection Processes'). Issues trending notably down include 'Peer/Colleague' concerns in general, 'Change Management,' and two leading subcategories last year, 'Departmental Climate' and 'Investigation Processes and Procedures.'



LEADING FACULTY CONCERNS

Communication and Respect in Evaluative and Peer/ Colleague Relationships
Telework/Flexibility
Position Security (NTTF)
Administrative Decisions

LEADING STUDENT CONCERNS

Administrative Services for Students
Organizational Priorities/Funding
Safety of Work/Living Environment
Departmental Climate (GEs)

LEADING OA CONCERNS

Telework/Flexibility
Communication and Respect in Evaluative/Hierarchical Relationships
Organizational Priorities
Administrative Decisions
Consultation/Management Coaching

LEADING CLASSIFIED STAFF CONCERNS

Assignments/Schedules
Communication in Evaluative/Hierarchical Relationships
Supervisory Effectiveness
Position Security
Safety Equipment



FY20

SERVICES AND OUTCOMES

The OP provided conflict coaching in 315 cases. This service provides single-party assistance navigating conflict and does not preclude use of other dispute resolution methods.

315

The OP provided multi-party dispute resolution services in 71 cases. Mediation, one type of multi-party dispute resolution, resulted in resolution 80% of the time, as reported by participants at mediation follow-up.

71

12

The OP provided informal climate and/or group conflict assessment in 12 cases.

19

The OP provided 19 training sessions to the campus community on conflict- and communication- related topics in the 2020 fiscal year.

15

The OP participated as a facilitator and/or neutral party for 15 large group meetings.



TRIENNIAL CAMPUS-WIDE OMBUDS SERVICE SURVEY

In 2020, the OP administered its first Triennial Campus-Wide Service Survey to gather feedback on ombuds services provided to the campus community.

Summary of Survey Scope and Administration

The survey covered services provided over the course of three academic years: 2016/2017, 2017/2018, and 2018/2019. Survey questions were designed to collect feedback on basic effectiveness and quality of OP services. The survey was developed in fall 2019 and administered via Qualtrics in spring 2020.

Summary of Methodology

The survey was a mixed-methods study consisting of three types of questions: (1) two preliminary questions to determine if respondents had engaged with the OP during the specified time and if so, in what way; (2) a set of questions related to quality and effectiveness of services, with response choices set on a five-point ordinal Likert scale to be analyzed using frequencies/percentages of responses in each category; and (3) one open-ended question to be interpreted using thematic analysis.

Summary of Survey Results

There were 204 respondents indicating that they had interacted with the ombuds program in the previous three years, prompting continuance in the survey.

Responses to the seven Likert scale questions (related to quality and effectiveness of the services) largely indicated positive experiences, with no less than 70% of responses to any question falling into the “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” categories. Neutral answers of “neither agree nor disagree” ranged from 5.64% to 10.91% of total responses and indications of negative experiences with responses of either “strongly disagree” or “somewhat disagree” ranged from a combined total of 7.89% to 19.61% of responses per question.

Summary of Future Action

Based on collected data, the OP has developed an action plan for addressing areas of improvement. This plan includes increasing awareness of the availability of annual reports on the website, reviewing and modifying internal policies and procedures related to visitor follow-up, and reviewing cases without resolution to look for trends and possible improvement related to those services.