




## Equal Opportunity Office

August 29, 2023

TO: Jere W. Morehead, President  
213 Administration Building

FROM: Qiana N. Wilson, Director   
Equal Opportunity Office  
278 Brooks Hall

RE: **2022-2023 Ombuds Program Report**

The Ombuds Program Report (“Report”) has been submitted annually to the Office of the President, since the Ombuds Program (“Program”) began in 2008. The initial purpose of the Program was to address concerns about the handling of sexual harassment complaints. The Program has appropriately and responsibly responded to this awareness and currently serves as a confidential resource for persons requiring information and support for alleged instances of sexual misconduct. Despite this continued focus, the Program has grown to aid in a variety of areas – resulting in sexual harassment issues consistently being a small percentage of the ombuds’ contacts.<sup>1</sup> With that understanding, this Report is charged with discussing trends or patterns in the reporting of issues and concerns by students, faculty, and staff, and making recommendations for changes or improvements to existing policies and procedures.

During the 2022-23 academic year, the ombuds<sup>2</sup> were: Charisse Harper from the Office of the Dean of Students, who served as the student ombudsperson; Dr. Joseph Bartges, Professor of Medicine and Nutrition in the Department of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery in the College of Veterinary Medicine, who served as the faculty ombudsperson; and Anjali Dougherty, Associate Director for the Office of Finance and Administration in the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, who served as the staff ombudsperson.

### **2022 – 2023 TRENDS AND PATTERNS**

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<sup>1</sup> There were three (3) reports of sexual harassment to the Ombuds during the 2022-2023 reporting period, which is equal to last year’s report.

<sup>2</sup> “Ombuds” or “Ombudspersons” are terms used interchangeably throughout this Report.

The ombudspersons addressed *111* concerns during the 2022-2023 reporting period.<sup>3</sup> This decrease in contacts as compared to the previous reporting period is most likely due to a change in the ombuds over the last year and the campus community's lack of familiarity with the new ombuds. The number of contacts from students was higher than the contacts from faculty and staff for the third year in a row.<sup>4</sup> During the 2019-2020 reporting period, the contacts for all three (3) areas were similar.<sup>5</sup> Each of the reporting periods since the 2019-2020 reporting period have seen increases in student contacts; student contacts for the 2021-2022 reporting period accounted for almost **57%** of the total ombuds contacts – up **20%** from the previous reporting period, and student contacts for the 2022-2023 reporting period accounted for almost **75%** of the total ombuds contacts – up **18%** from the previous reporting period. Much of this increase is explained by the rise in usage of the Program by graduate students.

## TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

Employment/workplace issues, particularly interpersonal conflict and supervision concerns continue to be the most prevalent matters considered by the faculty and staff ombudspersons. During the 2020-2021 reporting period, it was noted that “higher than average student concerns surrounding housing, health, and accommodations are expected considering the necessary adjustment to operations over the last 18 months.” The 2021-2022 reporting period observed contacts related to *these areas* drop to one contact, while the 2022-2023 reporting period observed contacts related to *housing* drop to 0<sup>6</sup>, while health accommodations, specifically mental health and disability accommodations, increased from 0 to 19 contacts<sup>7</sup>, from the previous reporting year. The contacts involving discrimination, personality conflicts, and graduate assistantships remain consistent with the previous reporting year.<sup>8</sup> The 2021 and 2022 Reports, which noted that the increase in student contacts were due to considerable uptick in graduate student usage of the Program, remains true for this reporting year as well. Graduate student visits continue to comprise more than half of the student contacts in 2022-2023.

## NOTABLES

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<sup>3</sup> There were *143* concerns logged during the 2022-2023 reporting period.

<sup>4</sup> Student contacts went from **33%** in 2019-2020 to **39%** in the 2020-2021 reporting year to **57%** in the 2021-2022 reporting year to **75%** 2022-2023 reporting period.

<sup>5</sup> Faculty contacts were **35**, staff contacts were **39**, and student contacts were **37**.

<sup>6</sup> The 2020-2021 reporting period saw housing issues account for more than **20%** of the total contacts.

<sup>7</sup> 19 contacts for disability/mental health accommodations accounts for almost a quarter of the total student contacts and accounts for more contacts than the staff and faculty ombuds received, respectively.

<sup>8</sup> These areas accounted for more than *one-third (1/3)* of the total student contacts during the 2021-2022 reporting period and only slightly decreased this reporting year with approximately 31% of student contacts involving these areas.

Overall, there is a consistent observation that some contacts are more complex and time-consuming than others, and contacts are drastically increasing for specific segments of the UGA population – namely graduate students and students seeking assistance with health accommodations. Staff had the lowest contacts, which is in line with expectations<sup>9</sup>. Faculty contacts remained consistent and complex. While all three Program areas have seen more requests for facilitated conversations and mediation as possible avenues of resolution, the most requests have been received by the faculty ombudspersons.

Training has been provided to the ombudspersons, with the support of the Office of the President, and will continue throughout the year as the ombuds have requested more training specific to colleges and universities. This past year, the ombuds were also provided with a membership for the International Ombuds Association (“IOC”). The IOC provides training and webinars, most of the sessions are provided at no costs to its members, and range in topics from “Trauma-Informed Ombudsing” to “Resilience Coaching: Tools to Help Visitors Build Resilience and Combat Burnout.”

While the Program operates independently in accordance with the Ombuds Program Charter, which states that the “Ombuds will operate under the supervision of the Coordinator. The Program is intended to be as independent in its structure, function, and appearance as possible. This means that in the legitimate performance of their duties, the ombuds shall be free from interference, retaliation, influence, or control of others outside the Program,” to ensure the university community understands, the Program’s website and URL<sup>10</sup> were updated during the 2021-2022 reporting year to remove any doubt of autonomy and confidentiality. The move to a URL that was independent of the EOO webpage proved to be useful in engaging more contacts who had concerns about confidentiality.

The next step in increasing visibility and use of the Program will be a small marketing campaign. While the level of outreach and engagement differed this year due to the onboarding and training of the new ombudspersons, the Program continued to see visitors. The level of engagement seen in the previous reporting year is expected to return along with increased visibility, outreach, and engagement.

## **SUMMARY**

The Program continues to serve as a resource for the entire UGA community. It provides an opportunity for community members to speak candidly about concerns and discuss those concerns in a safe environment. The Program also provides an opportunity for the ombuds to

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<sup>9</sup> The previous staff ombuds was the longest serving ombuds with the Program; the adjustment period and necessary awareness of the new staff ombuds could explain lower staff contacts.

<sup>10</sup> See Ombudsperson Program Website: <https://ombuds.uga.edu/>.

Ombuds Program Report

August 29, 2023

Page 4

engage in professional development through developing relationships with ombudspersons at USG and peer institutions, and through their IOC memberships. This upcoming year will see the Program continue to focus on areas of concern, meet with key stakeholders, and engage in the intentional and focused marketing of the Program.

The Ombuds Program is a valued part of the UGA community, and your continued support is appreciated.

Encls: 2022-2023 Ombudspersons Data Report

cc: Dr. Jack Hu, Provost



**OMBUDSPERSONS REPORT (Total for Staff, Faculty, and Students)**

**2022-2023**

Table 1

**All Ombudsperson Visitors**

**Status, Gender and Ethnicity of Contacts in 2021-2022**

<u>Status of Contact</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Not Known</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>African-American</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>Latino</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Not Known</u>
Student	42	36	5	83	11	3	29	0	0	39
Faculty	11	6	0	17	1	2	15	0	0	0
Staff	10	1	0	11	0	2	9	0	0	0
Non-UGA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>

**Types of Primary Issues Presented by Campus Constituencies**

<u>Types of concerns</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Non-UGA</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Financial Concerns	13	0	0	0	13
Student Academic	7	1	0	0	8
Student Conduct	4	1	0	0	5
Classroom Instruction	30	0	0	0	30
Faculty/Staff Performance	6	1	0	0	7
Employment/Workplace Issues	1	10	9	0	20
Faculty/Staff Conduct	3	3	0	0	6
Misc. Concerns	20	1	1	0	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>111</b>

Table 3

**Financial Concerns**

Contracts, emergency loans, encumbrances, fees, financial aid, fines, independent status, insurance, leases, paycheck, refunds, tuition, tuition waiver, graduate assistantships, other.

**Academic**

Academic probation/dismissal, add/drop, admission, certification, clinical/student teaching course, closed classes, comprehensive exams, credit transfer, incompletes, transfer, incompletes, degree/graduation requirements, medical withdrawals, other.

**Student Conduct**

Academic misconduct, alcohol, classroom disruption, due process, harassment, hazing, intimidation, judicial system, residence hall misconduct, roommate disputes, sanctions, sexual harassment, theft, other.

**Classroom Instruction**

Attendance, course syllabus, discriminatory grading, faculty absences, final exams, grade appeals, grade change, grading standards, make-up work, personality conflicts, quality of instruction, teacher fluency, other.

**Faculty/Staff Performance**

Inaccurate advising, inattentiveness, incompetence, retention of test/papers, availability, tardiness, attendance, completion of tasks.

**Employment/Workplace Issues**

Training, supervision, performance evaluation, pay, benefits, retirement, promotion/tenure, job classification/duties, work schedule/setting, hiring, discharge, unfit for duty, interpersonal conflict, disability issues (ADA/FMLA), conflict of interest, nepotism

**Faculty/Staff Conduct**

Deceitfulness, derogatory comments, discrimination, favoritism, harassment, intimidation, retaliation, rudeness, sexual harassment, theft, intoxication/under influence, insubordination, job abandonment, workplace violence, arrest/conviction, garnishment, other.

**Miscellaneous**

Policy Issues and Development, privacy issues, disability accommodations, parking, on-campus housing, legal issues, health concerns, ethical considerations, off-campus housing, immigration issues, off-campus problems, safety issues, career advising, not otherwise categorized (NOC).

**\*These data only represent allegations that were brought to the Ombudspersons and should not be interpreted as confirmed incidents.**

<u>Financial concerns</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Non-UGA</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Contracts	1	0	0	0	1
Emergency Loans	0	0	0	0	0
Encumbrances	0	0	0	0	0
Fees	0	0	0	0	0
Financial Aid	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0
Independent Status	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance	0	0	0	0	0
Leases	0	0	0	0	0
Paycheck	0	0	0	0	0
Refunds	0	0	0	0	0
Tuition	2	0	0	0	2
Tuition Waiver	2	0	0	0	2
Graduate Assistantships	8	0	0	0	8
Other	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>

<u>Academic concerns</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Staff</u>	<u>Non-UGA</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Academic probation/dismissal	1	0	0	0	1

Add/Drop	0	0	0	0	0
Admission	1	0	0	0	1
Certification	0	0	0	0	0
Clinical/student teaching course	0	1	0	0	1
Closed Classes	1	0	0	0	1
Comprehensive Exams	0	0	0	0	0
Credit Transfer	1	0	0	0	1
Incompletes	0	0	0	0	0
Degree/Graduation Requirements	2	0	0	0	2
Medical Withdrawals	0	0	0	0	0
Other-Thesis	1	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>Student Conduct</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Non-UGA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Academic Misconduct	2	0	0	0	2
Alcohol	0	0	0	0	0
Classroom Disruption	0	0	0	0	0
Due Process	0	0	0	0	0
Harassment	0	1	0	0	1
Hazing	0	0	0	0	0
Intimidation	0	0	0	0	0
Judicial System	0	0	0	0	0
Residence Hall Misconduct	0	0	0	0	0
Roommate Disputes	0	0	0	0	0
Sanctions	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual Harassment	0	0	0	0	0
Theft	0	0	0	0	0
Other-discrimination	2	0	0	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

<b>Classroom Instruction</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Non-UGA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Attendance	0	0	0	0	0
Course Syllabus	0	0	0	0	0
Discriminatory Grading	1	0	0	0	1
Faculty Absences	6	0	0	0	6
Final Exams	0	0	0	0	0
Grade Appeals	8	0	0	0	8
Grade Change	1	0	0	0	1
Grading Standards	0	0	0	0	2
Make-Up Work	0	0	0	0	0
Personality Conflicts	14	0	0	0	14
Quality of Instruction	0	0	0	0	0
Teacher Fluency	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>

<b>Faculty/Staff Performance</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Non-UGA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Inaccurate Advising	0	0	0	0	0
Inattentiveness	0	0	0	0	0
Incompetence	0	0	0	0	0
Retention of test/papers	0	0	0	0	0
Availability	0	0	0	0	0
Tardiness	0	0	0	0	0
Attendance	6	0	0	0	6
Completion of Tasks	0	1	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>

<b>Employment/Workplace Issues</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Non-UGA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Training	0	0	0	0	0
Supervision	0	0	4	0	0
Performance Evaluation	0	5	0	0	5
Pay	1	0	3	0	4
Benefits	0	0	0	0	0
Retirement	0	0	0	0	0
Promotion/Tenure	0	0	0	0	0
Job Classification/Duties	0	1	1	0	2
Work Schedule/Setting	0	0	1	0	0
Hiring	0	0	0	0	0
Discharge	0	0	0	0	0
Unfit for Duty	0	0	0	0	0
Interpersonal Conflict	0	3	0	0	3
Disability Issues (ADA/FMLA)	0	0	0	0	0
Conflict of Interest	0	1	0	0	1

