




Equal Opportunity Office

August 29, 2024

TO: Jere W. Morehead, President
213 Administration Building

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

RE: **2023-2024 Ombuds Annual Report**

Since the inception of the Ombuds Program (“Program”), in 2008, the Ombuds Annual Report has been submitted to the Office of the President. The initial purpose of the Program was to address concerns surrounding the handling of sexual harassment/misconduct 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 misconduct issues consistently being a small percentage of the ombuds’ contacts.¹ With that understanding, this Report discusses 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 2023-24 academic year, the ombuds² were: Charisse Harper, HR Senior Manager in 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, Senior Director of Fiscal Affairs in Public Service and Outreach, who served as the staff ombudsperson. All three ombuds opted to renew their ombuds service for an additional two years, effective September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2026.

Throughout the past year, the ombuds met with different units to provide information about the Program and consider ways the Program might engage with campus partners to provide the greatest service to the UGA community.³

¹ There was one report of sexual harassment to the ombuds during the 2023-2024 reporting period which is up from last year’s report of three contacts involving sexual harassment. There were also three contacts related to general harassment.

² “Ombuds” or “Ombudspersons” are terms used interchangeably throughout this Report.

³ These meetings included providing program overviews to the FACS Spring Assembly and Staff Council and attending the UGA Staff Resource Fair.

2023 – 2024 TRENDS AND PATTERNS

The ombuds addressed *111* concerns during the 2023-2024 reporting period. This is consistent with the previous year's number of contacts.⁴ Prior to 2020, the contacts for all three ombuds areas (student, faculty, and staff) were similar.⁵ For the fourth straight year, the number of contacts from students was higher than the contacts from faculty and staff.⁶ For the 2023-2024 period, student contacts accounted for just over **69%** of the total ombuds contacts, a slight decrease from the previous year.

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

Of the contact topics listed, a fair number of contacts were related to miscellaneous and financial concerns.⁷ Faculty/staff conduct, particularly harassment, discrimination, and retaliation concerns were the most prevalent matters addressed by the faculty ombudsperson. The staff ombudsperson addressed miscellaneous concerns most. Financial concerns⁸ were the most predominant student-logged contacts, with miscellaneous concerns being the next most prevalent topic.⁹

During the 2021-2022 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 2022-2023 reporting period noted contacts related to housing dropped to a single contact,¹⁰ while health accommodations, specifically mental health and disability accommodations, increased from 0 to 19 contacts from the previous reporting year. In 2023-2024, the housing contacts increased to 6, while the health accommodations contacts decreased to 10.¹¹

Overall, for students, this period saw an increase in contacts related to graduate assistantships, but a decrease in contacts related to personality conflicts.¹² The 2022 report, stated that the “increase [in student contacts] was mostly attributed to the almost **30%** rise in student contacts

⁴ There were *111* concerns logged during the 2022-2023 reporting period.

⁵ Faculty contacts were *35*, staff contacts were *39*, and student contacts were *37*.

⁶ Student contacts went from *33%* of the total contacts in 2020-2021 to *39%* in the 2021-2022 reporting period, to *75%* in the 2022-2023 reporting period.

⁷ *26* miscellaneous concerns and *23* financial concerns visits.

⁸ Graduate assistantships and tuition waivers account for *20%* of student contacts.

⁹ Under the topic of miscellaneous concerns are 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).

¹⁰ The 2020-2021 reporting period saw housing issues account for more than *20%* of the total contacts.

¹¹ Under the miscellaneous category, mental health contacts dropped from 16 to 10 and disability accommodations contacts dropped from 3 to 0.

¹² These areas accounted for more than *one-quarter* of the total student contacts during the 2022-2023 reporting period.

with the student ombudsperson, who noted the increase in graduate student concerns and reports,” this has remained true for the last two years.

NOTABLES

On the whole, 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 but decreasing for other segments. As resources are deployed to address issues, the ombuds notice decreased contacts in areas surrounding those resources.

Each year, the ombuds are provided with a membership to 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.” With the support of the Office of the President, opportunities for training will continue to be provided to the ombuds.

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 experiences. The Program also provides an opportunity for the ombuds to engage in professional development through developing relationships with ombudspersons at other USG and peer institutions. This upcoming year will see the Program continue to focus on areas of concern, meet with key stakeholders, and provide intentional communication with the campus community to ensure knowledge and understanding of the Program.

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

Encls: 2023-2024 Ombudspersons Data Report

cc: Dr. Jack Hu, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Dr. Michelle Cook, Vice President for Student Affairs
Dr. Juanita Hicks, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer

OMBUDSPERSONS REPORT

Total Ombudspersons Report for 2023-2024 (Student, Staff, Faculty)

Table 1

All Ombudsperson Visitors

Status, Gender and Ethnicity of Contacts in 2023-2024

Status of Contact	Female	Male	Not Known	TOTAL	African-American	Asian	Caucasian	Latino	Other	Not Known
Student	42	35	0	77	10	6	31	0	1	27
Faculty	9	7	0	16	2	5	5	0	4	0
Staff	12	6	0	18	3	1	16	0	0	0
Non-UGA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	63	48	0	111	15	12	52	0	5	27

Types of Primary Issues Presented by Campus Constituencies

Types of concerns	Students	Faculty	Staff	Non-UGA	TOTAL
Financial Concerns	21	1	0	0	22
Student Academic	8	0	0	0	8
Student Conduct	4	0	0	0	4
Classroom Instruction	13	0	0	0	13
Faculty/Staff Performance	0	0	0	0	0
Employment/Workplace Issues	17	5	0	0	22
Faculty/Staff Conduct	9	7	0	0	16
Misc. Concerns	20	1	5	0	26
TOTAL	92	14	5	0	111

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.**

Financial concerns	Students	Faculty	Staff	Non-UGA	TOTAL
Contracts	0	0	0	0	0
Emergency Loans	0	0	0	0	0
Encumbrances	0	0	0	0	0
Fees	0	0	0	0	0
Financial Aid	3	0	0	0	3
Fines	0	0	0	0	0
Independent Status	0	0	0	0	0
Insurance	1	0	0	0	1
Leases	0	0	0	0	0
Paycheck	0	0	0	0	0
Refunds	0	0	0	0	0
Tuition	1	0	0	0	1
Tuition Waiver	3	0	0	0	3
Graduate Assistantships	13	0	0	0	13
Other	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	21	1	0	0	22

Academic concerns	Students	Faculty	Staff	Non-UGA	TOTAL
Academic probation/dismissal	2	0	0	0	2

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

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

Classroom Instruction	Students	Faculty	Staff	Non-UGA	TOTAL
Attendance	4	0	0	0	4
Course Syllabus	0	0	0	0	0
Discriminatory Grading	0	0	0	0	0
Faculty Absences	2	0	0	0	2
Final Exams	0	0	0	0	0
Grade Appeals	4	0	0	0	4
Grade Change	0	0	0	0	0
Grading Standards	1	0	0	0	1
Make-Up Work	0	0	0	0	0
Personality Conflicts	1	0	0	0	1
Quality of Instruction	0	0	0	0	0
Teacher Fluency-Complaint	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	13	0	0	0	13

Faculty/Staff Performance	Students	Faculty	Staff	Non-UGA	TOTAL
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	0	0	0	0	0
Completion of Tasks	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0

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

Nepotism	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	5	11	0	17
Faculty/Staff Conduct	Students	Faculty	Staff	Non-UGA	TOTAL
Deceitfulness	0	0	0	0	0
Derogatory Comments	0	0	0	0	0
Discrimination	0	3	0	0	3
Favoritism	0	0	0	0	0
Harassment	1	1	1	0	3
Intimidation	2	2	0	0	2
Retaliation	6	0	0	0	6
Rudeness	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual Harassment	0	0	1	0	1
Theft	0	0	0	0	0
Intoxification/Under Influence	0	0	0	0	0
Insubordination	0	0	0	0	0
Job Abandonment	0	0	0	0	0
Workplace Violence	0	0	0	0	0
Arrest/Conviction	1	0	0	0	1
Garnishment	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	10	7	2	0	9
Miscellaneous	Students	Faculty	Staff	Non-UGA	TOTAL
Policy Issues and Development	0	1	0	0	1
Privacy Issues	0	0	1	0	1
Disability Accommodations	0	0	0	0	0
Parking	2	0	0	0	2
On-Campus Housing	5	0	0	0	5
Legal Issues	1	0	0	0	1
Health Concerns* Mental Health	10	0	0	0	10
Ethical Considerations	0	0	0	0	0
Off-Campus Housing	1	0	0	0	1
Immigration Issues	0	0	0	0	0
Off-Campus Problems	0	0	0	0	0
Safety Issues	0	0	0	0	0
Career Advising	0	0	0	0	0
Not Otherwise Categorized (NOC)	1	0	4	0	5
TOTAL	20	1	5	0	20

Table 4

Date	Topic	Organization/Group
3/29/2024	Charisse-Ombuds Presentation	
3/5/22024	Anjali-Gave out flyers and provided information	UGA Staff Resource Fair
3/29/2024	Anjali-Ombuds Program Overview	FACS Spring Assembly
5/1/2024	Anjali-Ombuds Program Overview	Staff Council - Monthly Meeting
9/12023	Joe-Meeting with President Morehead	Ombuds Report
3/29/2024	Joe-Meeting about Ombudsperson	Family and Consumer Science

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