

Office of the Ombudsman

Report for Years

2005, 2006 & January-July 2007

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The Ombudsman's Office at UC Santa Cruz

Mission

The UCSC Ombudsman's Office facilitates informal problem-solving and complaint resolution for all members of the campus community: students, staff, faculty, non-faculty academics, and alumni. The Ombuds may also assist parents when permission is given by their student. In all cases, emphasis is placed on improving visitors' communication and negotiation skills to enable them to manage their concerns with autonomy and respect.

What We Do

The Campus Ombuds provides confidential, impartial, and informal assistance with any university-related issue. Our goal is to help visitors understand their needs and values, identify options that meet their needs, and provide support in negotiating mutually acceptable solutions. The Campus Ombuds may also make referrals to other offices and/or suggest other resources to resolve their issues.

The Office also provides training and group facilitation in collaborative planning and decision-making processes such as:

- Interest-based negotiation (also known as the Consensus-Building Approach)
- Strength-based strategic planning (also known as Appreciative Inquiry)
- Dialogue (using the World Café and Open Space approaches)

The Ombuds does not participate in formal grievances, give legal advice, make or seek to reverse administrative decisions, assign sanctions, or receive "official notice" for the university about issues of concern. If a difficult situation in a given unit or department is brought to the attention of the Ombuds she may seek to learn more in order to identify strategies to ease the situation. The Office does not, however, conduct formal investigations or respond to anonymous complaints.

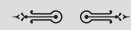
Standards of Practice

The Ombudsman's Office seeks to fulfill its responsibilities with independence, impartiality, informality, and confidentiality — the standards of practice established by the International Ombudsman Association some years ago. The Office also operates according to the Declaration of Best Practices adopted in 2007 by Ombudsman's offices in the University of California system. For more information on standards of practice and best practices please see the UCSC Ombuds Web site: <http://www2.ucsc.edu/ombuds/>

All confidential matters remain within the Ombudsman's Office. Once a case is closed, all visitor data and related information is entered into the generic office database. Personal data is eliminated and all written materials are shredded.

Students

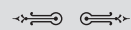
I just wanted to follow up on our discussion a few months back. I successfully completed my QE process and was awarded honors. Thank you for the advice and guidance during a confusing time.



I know taking students on for intern projects requires extra time and effort on your part, and I appreciate your help. I enjoyed researching organizations and programs and feel I developed new ideas for future plans. Thanks again!



I just talked to the person you recommended. She was more helpful than I could have hoped for. Thank you for advising me to call her. I really appreciate what you have done for me.



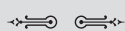
Thank you so much for your thoughtful planning and skilled (and nimble!) facilitation. I greatly appreciate also your willingness to meet according to the students' schedules. It was a pleasure to work with you, as always.

Faculty

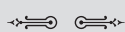
Thank you for facilitating today's session on social justice. I think we're much clearer about what [everyone's] needs are. That's an important first step. I'll work with our colleagues and students to see that the conversations continue.



I imagine this was not an easy day for you, given all the ways we diverted your planning. I really appreciate your creative flexibility in response to our needs!



My chair is going to send me a formal letter of review of my work...I want to thank you for giving me a way to rectify the situation. Hopefully everything can progress nicely.



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Overview of Office Visitors and Issues, 2005-June 2007

Total Contacts by UCSC Community Members

A total of 434 people initiated visits to the UCSC Ombuds Office over the course of this reporting period. Of these visitors slightly less than half were undergraduates and about one third were staff. Faculty and graduate students follow in equal numbers. About two-thirds of all visits required more than one meeting or phone call with an average duration of 2.3 hours. The remainder was addressed in a single contact of an hour or so.

In addition approximately 160 individuals were assisted in the course of a short telephone conversation or e-mail. These brief contacts usually concern a straightforward procedural or policy question easily answered in the moment.

Services Provided to Individuals Included:

- Explaining
- Advising & Expediting
- Consulting
- Listening/Coaching
- Referrals
- Facilitated Conversations (Mediation)

The majority of visitors to the office seek assistance with conflicts with another individual. Other issues include redress of actual or perceived unfairness; understanding a campus policy or procedure; questioning the implementation of a policy or procedure; or expediting an academic action or business process that has stalled or become unduly complicated. Many visitors come to the office more than once, and many invite others to participate in one or more subsequent meetings—usually facilitated conversations.

The Ombuds also provides units or department heads with information on policies, procedures, and problem-solving strategies; facilitates points-of-contact for further assistance; and/or opens avenues of communication that have become blocked.

Some examples include:

- facilitating a department meeting to reach consensus on a hiring decision
- identifying options to address a potential conflict-of-interest in a department
- facilitating a conversation to clarify roles and responsibilities between grad students and their advisor on a research project
- clarifying admission policies to a first-year student who has been de-admitted due to unacceptable senior-year grades

Services Provided to Groups

Over the last two-and-a-half years the Campus Ombuds provided facilitation/mediation assistance and training in communication, problem-solving and meeting facilitation to 38 administrative units, academic departments, and student groups. Issues included interpersonal communication, lack of clarity on unit priorities, personal conduct, need for better team work, decision-making and priority setting, and conflict management. These “assists” are typically complex and on-going. They are not included in the individual visitor database and are not reflected in the charts on pp 6-7.

Some examples include:

- serving as a mentor in program planning for two student-directed organizations
- providing training in communication and meeting facilitation for a senior administrative unit dealing with the effects of business transformation
- designing and facilitating meetings of an advisory group charged with development of an access policy for constituents
- facilitating a cross-boundary advisory group charged with making recommendations to the Chancellor regarding hate/bias incidents

Campus Outreach

Staff: The Office makes presentations to all New Employee Orientations (about six each year).

Students: The Ombuds participates in the fall student adjudicator training, TA training, and the fall Residential Life Resource Fair. Letters reminding the college staff and students of Ombuds services, and bookmarks with contact information are sent to the colleges each fall. An ad is placed each quarter in the Schedule of Classes.

Faculty: Letters are sent to the divisions and department offices in the fall.

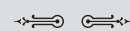
The new Ombuds web site (<http://www2.ucsc.edu/ombuds/>) provides information on how and when to contact the Ombuds, what services are provided, and additional information on communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, peace-making, and health and well-being.

Office Staff

Since 2002 the Ombudsman’s Office has been staffed by Laurie McCann. She graduated from UC Berkeley, served two years in the Peace Corps in West Africa and later earned an MA in Psychology from CSU Sonoma. Subsequently she led outdoor adventure camps for teenagers and college students, worked as an environmental activist, and eventually moved into the field of mediation and facilitation of environmental conflict resolution.

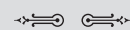
Ms. McCann is a member of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and a member of the UC system-wide Ombuds group. This group has developed a best-practices document identifying professional standards of practice within the UC system. She is also a member of the Northern California Association for Dispute Resolution, the International Association of Facilitators, the Northern California Dialogue and Deliberation Network, and Aikido Extensions — an international group that supports the introduction of embodied conflict resolution into traditional peace-making approaches.

Thanks for the communication strategies—I can already see how useful they’ll be as reminders going into the meeting with the student—and for your more general help with this difficult process.

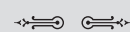


Staff

Last year I talked to you about our office situation. Things are much better now. Thanks for your help.



Thank you so much for all the facilitating you have provided. I have learned a lot from you and am trying to be advertent to using what I have learned in positive ways. Thanks again.



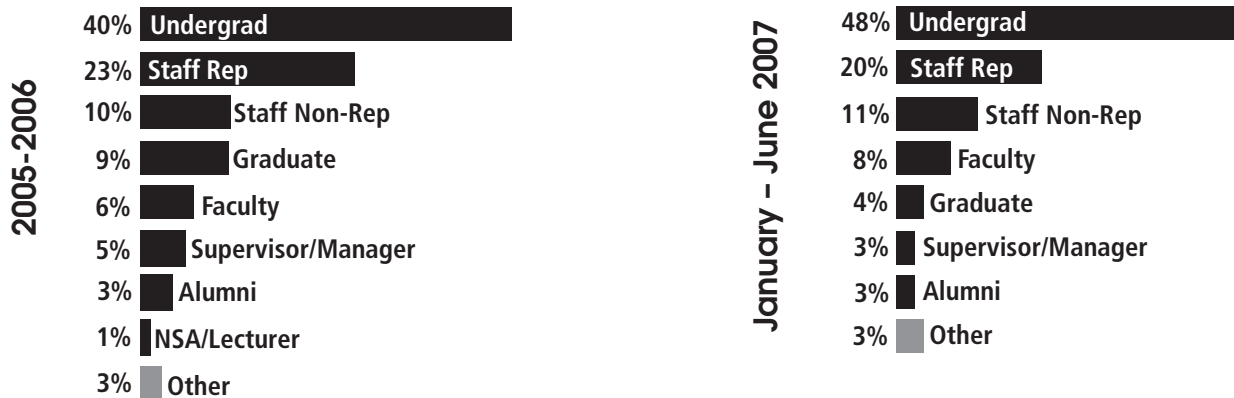
Thank you for the great mediation session today and please pass my thanks on to your colleague as well. You both did an amazing job!



A Closer Look at the Numbers

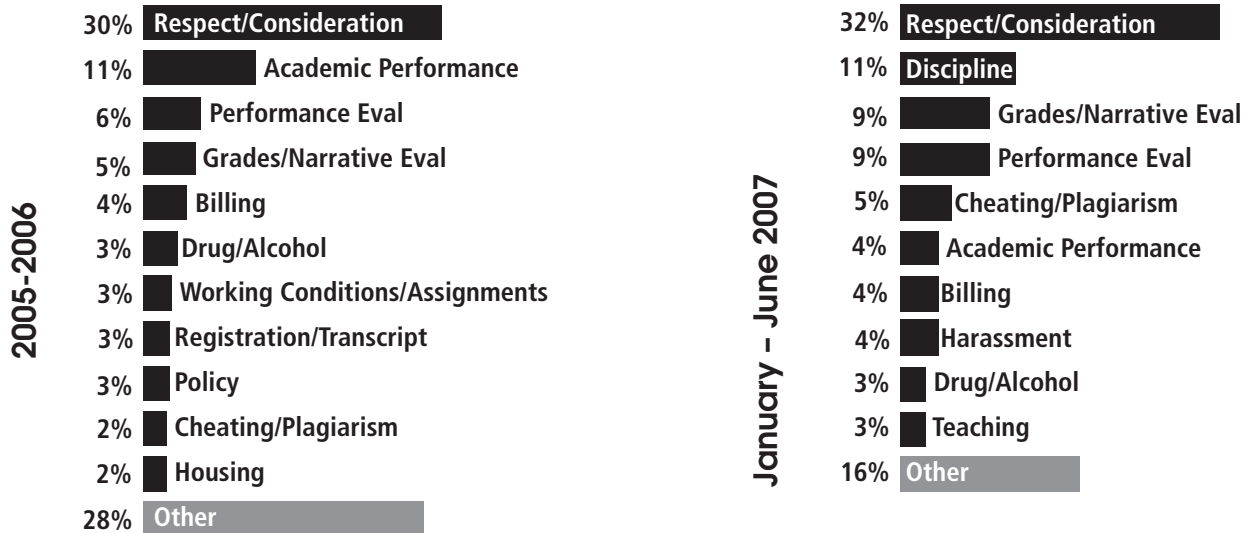
Services were provided to an estimated 600 visitors (adding in-person visits to phone and e-mail consultations) and 38 groups over the time period of this report. Visitors comprise all sectors of the campus community, including alumni and parents.

WHO CONTACTED THE OFFICE?



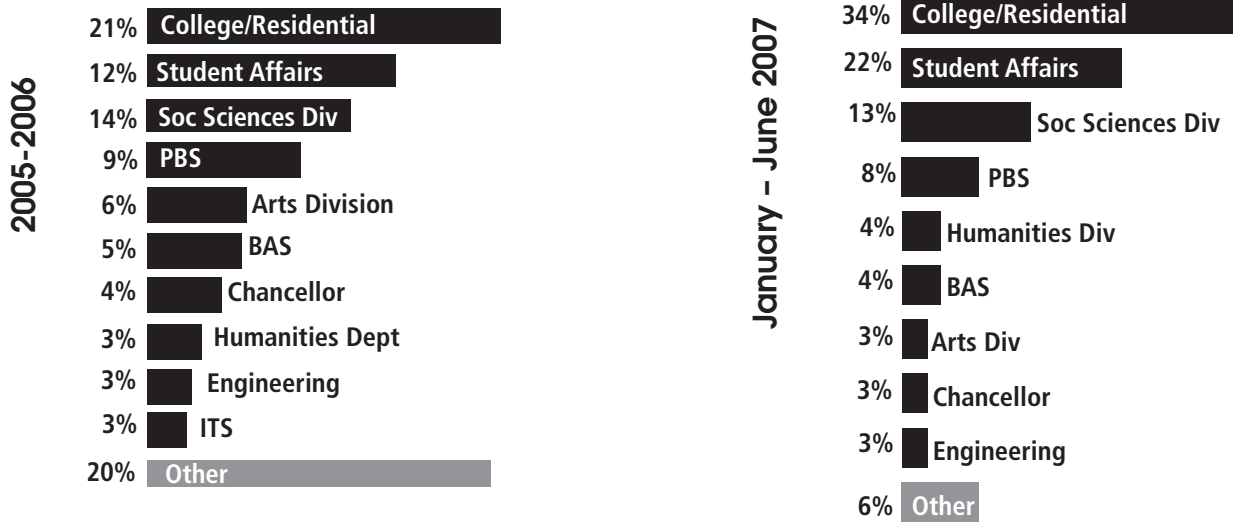
Undergraduates and staff (represented and non-represented) constitute the majority of visitors to the Ombudsman's Office.

WHAT WERE THE MOST COMMON ISSUES?



About one-third of complaints brought by visitors were related to conduct: respect, inclusion, consideration, and similar relationship issues. Concerns related to academic issues were second most common.

WHERE DID THE ISSUES ORIGINATE?



Issues related to residential life and student affairs showed the highest number of concerns. "Other" comprises a very wide range of sources.

WHAT SERVICES WERE MOST FREQUENTLY PROVIDED?



Interpersonal conflict resolution is the most common service, followed by expedition of institutional problems (billing, grades, transcripts, etc).

HOW MANY CONCERNS WERE RESOLVED?



Most concerns are resolved at some level. See "Message from Campus Ombuds" for more information.

IV

Issues & Recommendations

Issue: The percentage of cases related to “respect/consideration” in all sectors of the campus community continues to be significant, indicating a need for better conflict management and negotiation skills.

Recommendation: Continue providing training opportunities for all members of the campus community in Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and Interest-Based Negotiation (IBA), and release time to participate.

Issue: The level of concern on campus regarding hate/bias incidents has elevated in the last year. Resources for managing incidents in the student sector have been inadequate; and there currently is no process for responding to such incidents among staff and faculty.

Recommendation: Provide resources and visible leadership on this issue at the highest levels. Create a cross-boundary Hate/Advisory Response Board for staff, students, and faculty incidents and provide professional training to its members. Offer service credit or academic credit to members as appropriate.

Issue: Some important changes and clarifications have been made regarding admission of first-year students contingent upon senior-year academic performance. Some prospective students appear not to be fully aware of these changes and/or their consequences.

Recommendation: Encourage the appropriate committee of the Academic Senate and leadership of the Admissions Office to work together in clarifying these policies in all materials for prospective students.

Issue: Concerns over “campus climate” continue to appear in the Ombuds Office, in the deliberations of the Campus Welfare Committee (CWC), and in various reports and surveys. While some concerns track to specific issues (parking, compensation) it would be useful to identify, better understand, and respond to other more broad-based concerns.

Recommendation: Convene a series of cross-boundary “World Cafés” inviting members from all sectors of the community to share their concerns and identify possible solutions. These events would be professionally designed and facilitated to ensure useful outcomes.

Issue: A range of other events has highlighted the lack of awareness of health and wellness resources available to faculty, staff, and students. In addition, there has been an increase nationally in the rise of student suicides in higher education as well as within the UC system.

Recommendation: Integrate and promote the various efforts underway to support campus health and well being.