



The University of Texas at Austin Office of the Student Ombuds

2015-2016 Impact Report

Welcome

Ombuds Staff

*Kouang Chan,
Director / Ombudsperson*

*Brittany Linton,
Former Director / Ombudsperson*

*Vivian Wilbon,
Administrative Associate*

*Victoria Bailey,
Graduate Assistant (2015-2016)*

*Amy Blum,
Graduate Assistant (2015-2016)*

It is my pleasure to present the 2015-2016 impact report for the Office of the Student Ombuds (OSO) at the University of Texas at Austin. This impact report is based on the data collected and cataloged by the previous ombudsperson, Brittany Linton. I want to recognize the tremendous work that Brittany has done in developing and growing the OSO at the University of Texas at Austin and I look forward to nurturing what she started.

and all its students. I envision the OSO playing an integral role in the success of student learning and the University's development.

The OSO does this by helping students help themselves. We listen to student concerns, provide them with a neutral environment to discuss issues, assist in generating options and ideas for resolution, and seek to understand what is important for our students.

provide opportunities for growth. For every positive change in a student's life is a positive ripple in the lives of those around them.

We are grateful to serve and help our students. Thank you to those who support the mission of the OSO and its work.

With gratitude,
Kouang Chan
Director & Ombudsperson

I'd like to take this time to express my gratitude and excitement on joining the Longhorn family as its first full time Director. I am humbled to serve this "university of the first class"

We work to uplift the University in its Core Purpose, "to transform lives for the benefit of society" with every difficulty and concern brought through our doors. These moments

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Summary

Visitors Served:

- * 2042 Visitor Contact
- * 361 Visitor Cases

More on page 3

Classification of Visitors:

- * Undergraduate Students
- * Graduate Students
- * Administrators/Faculty

More on page 3

Nature of Concerns:

- Nature of Cases were mostly
- * 59% Academic
 - * 26% Conduct

More on page 4

Office Mission

The Office of the Student Ombuds provides a neutral, impartial, and confidential environment for students to voice concerns related to life at The University of Texas at Austin. The OSO functions in an independent and informal manner to help students discover pathways and options for effective problem solving and conflict resolution.

Core Principles

CONFIDENTIAL

In order to create a safe place to voice concerns, evaluate issues, and generate options, the Ombuds maintains privacy and holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence unless given permission to do so and to the extent permitted by law and University policy.

NEUTRAL

As an appointed neutral third party, the Student Ombuds does not side with any individual, the University, or other parties involved.

INDEPENDENT

The Student Ombuds is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the University.

INFORMALITY

The Student Ombuds, as an informal resource does not participate in any formal adjudicative procedure related to concerns. However, the Ombuds does assist students in accessing formal procedures to help resolve concerns.

Why Students Visit

POLICY

Students seek to understand how the university functions.

RESOURCES

Students come seeking the proper channels to make complaints or address concerns.

OPTIONS

Students want to know what their options are.

COACHING

The OSO consults and coaches students with communication concerns between professors, classmates, and staff.

SPEAK FREELY

Students seek a space to express their frustrations and anxieties about school issues.

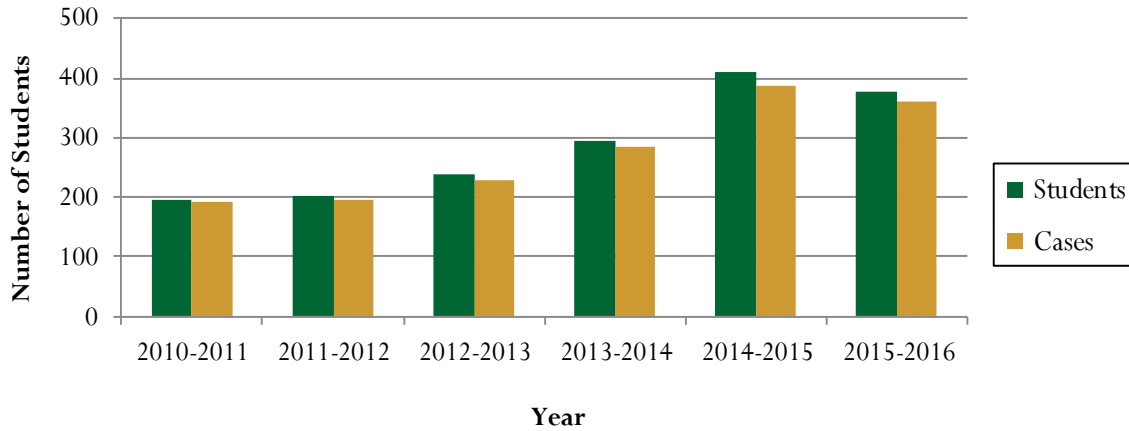
LISTENING

Students want a place they feel they can be heard by the university.

Visitor Traffic

The OSO made contact with 2042 visitors, an increase from the previous year
The OSO saw 376 students last year with 361 recorded cases, a small decrease from the previous year.

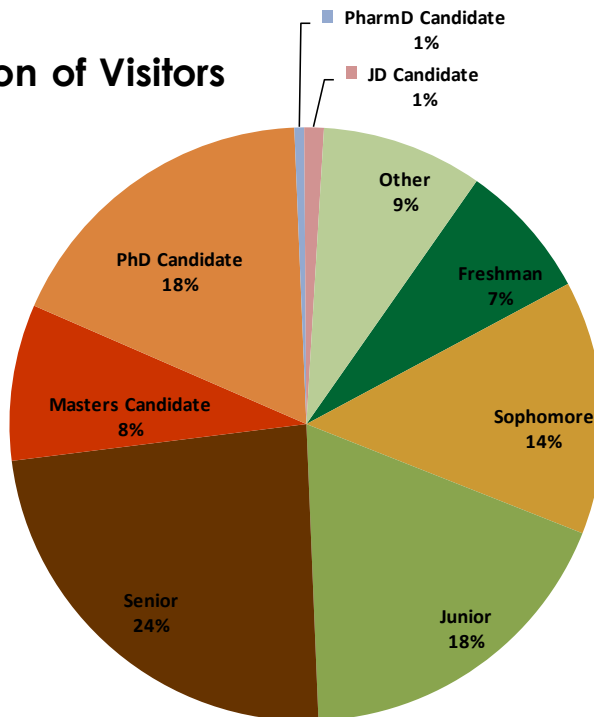
Students Served



Who are our visitors?

A majority of visitors to the OSO are graduate students and seniors. The remainder is spread through the other classes, faculty, and staff. The OSO also recorded 37 international students using the office.

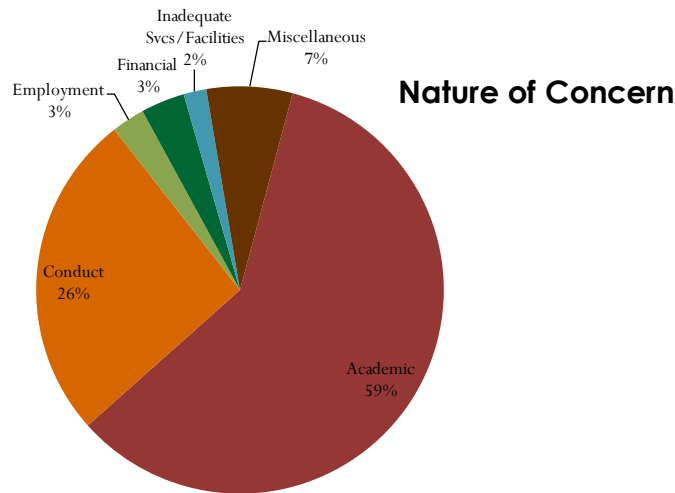
Classification of Visitors



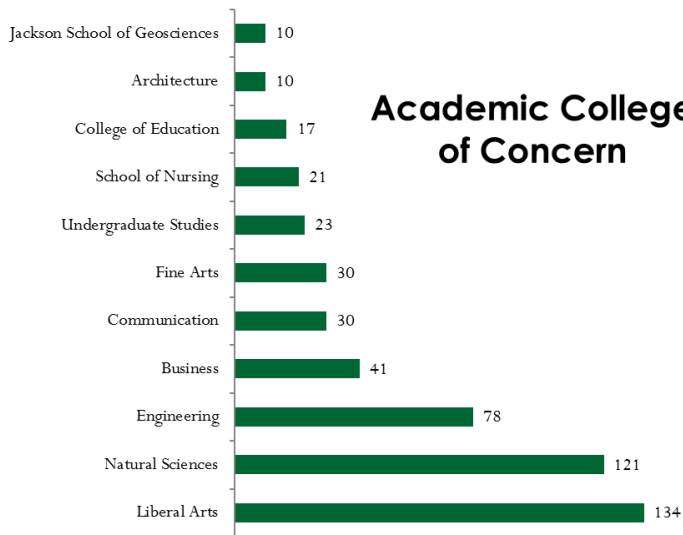
“Other visitors consist of University Administrators, Faculty, and those who did not provide a title.”

Student Concerns

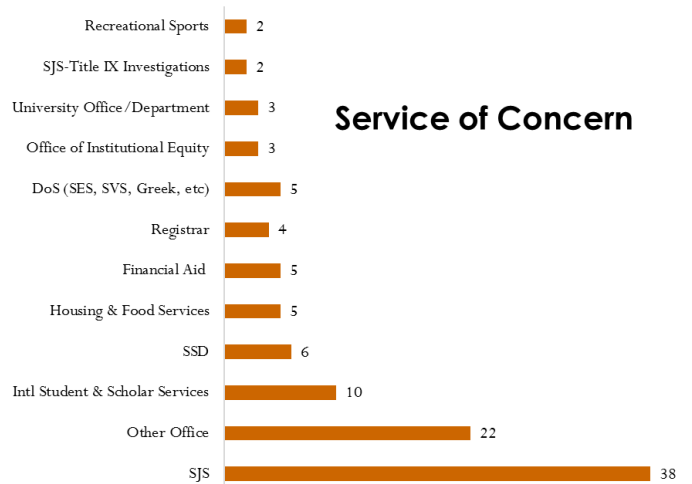
59% of the office's concerns were academic in nature, an increase from 53% in 2014-15. These cases include grade disputes, syllabus concerns, probation and dismissal, and registration difficulties. Additionally, academic cases include graduate student difficulties with their program requirements, faculty advisors, and dissertation committees.



Academic College/Service of Concern



The College of Pharmacy, Graduate School, School of Information, School of Law, Social Work, Public Affairs, University Extension, and Plan II had less than 10 cases.

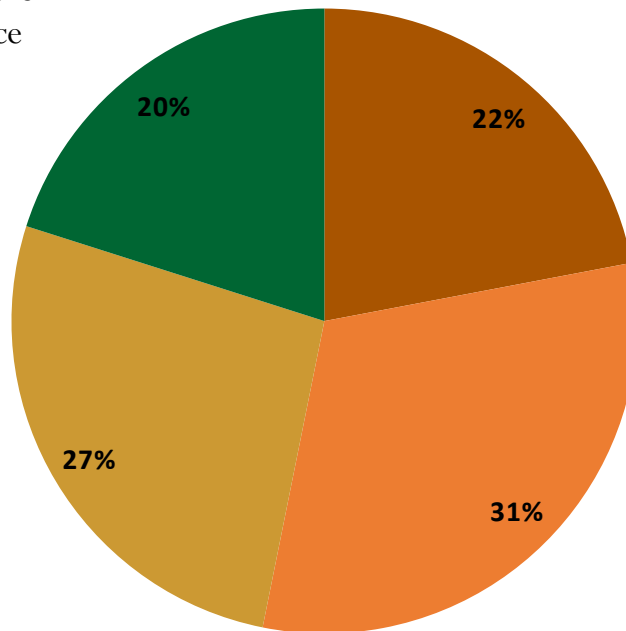


Other Offices include but are not limited to Facilities, Admissions, Title IX, New Student Services, Libraries, and the Counseling Mental Health Center.

How does the Ombuds help?

The OSO assist students and visitors in a variety of ways depending on the concerns. Its categories of assistance include:

- Extensive consulting and coaching
- Help students understand university policy and procedures
- Refer and guide students to appropriate resources
- Discuss Communication Skills



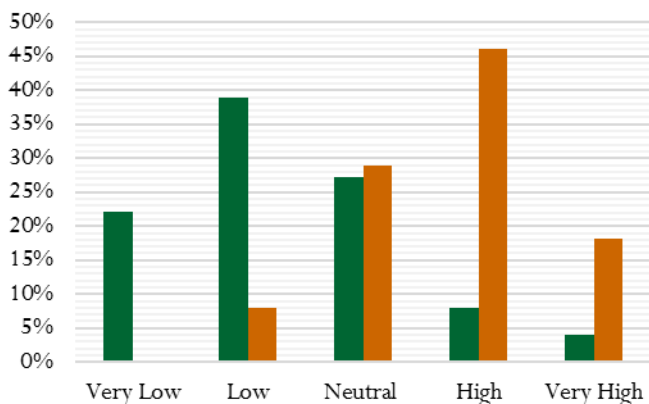
“It’s nice knowing that there are multiple options in handling conflicts, and that helps reduce anxiety.”

Student Stress and Confidence Levels

After each visit, students are given the option of completing a survey. A few questions ask the students to rate their confidence and stress levels before and after their visit. The following is the result of the students’ responses.

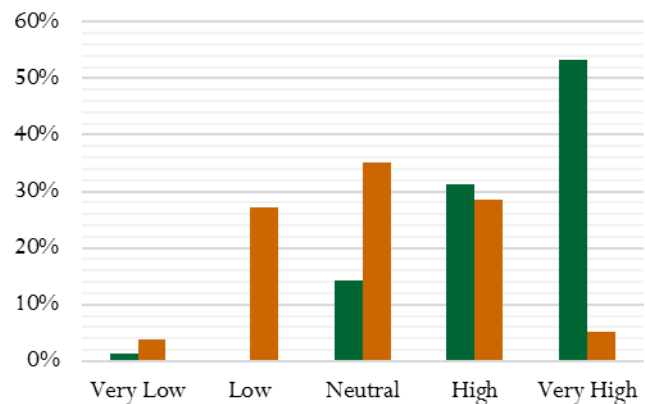
Confidence Levels

■ BEFORE Visit ■ AFTER Visit



Stress Levels

■ BEFORE Visit ■ AFTER Visit



Student and Visitor Feedback

The OSO is always striving to improve its services. We welcome any feedback students have. Here are a few comments from student visitors after meeting with the office.

“Respectful and very helpful!”

“It's nice knowing that there are multiple options in handling conflicts, and that helps reduce anxiety.”

“Great consultation, gave me options to think about.”

“Thank you Ombuds! This is my second time coming to the office with a concern and I am always treated with respect and offered solid advice.”

“Thanks for your advice! It was so nice talking with an unbiased, knowledgeable, listener and getting feedback and options!”

THE OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS

The University of Texas at Austin
Student Services Building G1.404
100 West Dean Keeton Stop, A6000
Austin, TX 78712

Phone: 512-471-3825

E-mail (not confidential):
studentombuds@austin.utexas.edu

We are on the web!

www.ombuds.utexas.edu/student

The Office of the Student Ombuds provides a neutral, impartial, and confidential environment for students to voice concerns related to life at The University of Texas at Austin, and provides information and assistance to students who have University-related questions or complaints. The student ombuds functions in an independent and informal manner to help students discover options for effective problem solving and conflict resolution. The office identifies and provides recommendations to the University regarding systemic issues. The student ombuds is an advocate for fair and equitably administered processes and does not side with individuals or the University. The office helps the University uphold the institutional core values and the honor code. The Office of the Student Ombuds:

- *Provides students with information, referrals, and assistance with appropriate processes for addressing University-related concerns.*
- *Helps students receive expeditious, fair, and impartial treatment.*
- *Provides students with voluntary conflict management for disputes and concerns related to student life at the University, both academic and non-academic. This includes identification of options, policy clarification, conflict coaching, mediation, training, and other conflict resolution or consultative services as appropriate.*

The student ombuds respects the confidentiality and privacy of all persons except with expressed permission, or as required by law, or when there is a perceived imminent risk of serious harm. The Office of the Student Ombuds does not maintain identifying records and it asserts privilege with regard to the identity of visitors and their concerns. The office is not an agent of notice and does not receive notice for the University.

The University of Texas at Austin General Information Catalog, 2016-17