



# The University of Texas at Austin University Ombuds

## 2017-2018 Impact Report: Students and Staff

### Welcome

#### Ombuds Staff

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Thank you for taking the time to read the 2017-18 impact report for the Office of the University Ombuds for Students and Staff. During the 2017-18 academic year the staff and student ombuds offices combined to form the Office of the University Ombuds for Students and Staff.

As the offices combined, the staff of the ombuds office continue to support and provide quality services for our student and staff population. It is our mission to help our visitors find ways to help themselves.

We recognize our different constituents require different services, and we

do all we can to support and serve. For example, in serving our staff visitors, we provide specific conflict coaching to help navigate issues and concerns. We also provide to the campus as a whole workshops and trainings around workplace incivility.

In serving staff, we observed that many of the categories and issues of concerns relate to interpersonal conflict and behavior concerns of supervisors or co-workers.

One recommendation the ombuds office offers is to provide managers with increased training and support in leadership and management.

In serving students we look for new ways to support their learning and connection to the university.

A notable program is our Dinner with 16 Longhorns, in partnership with the Vice President for Student Affairs and with Student Government. This program was designed to provide a space for students to explore one another's deep stories and practice empathy.

Thank you to those who've supported and partnered with our office.

With gratitude,

Kouang Chan, J.D.

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### Summary

#### Visitors Served:

- \* 1906 Visitor Contact
- \* 415 Visitor Cases

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#### Classification of Visitors:

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

More on page 3

#### Nature of Concerns:

Nature of Cases were mostly

- \* 39% Academic
- \* 30% Conduct

More on page 4

# Office Mission

The Office of the University Ombuds for Students and Staff provides a neutral, impartial, and confidential environment for students and staff to voice concerns related to life at The University of Texas at Austin. The office functions in an independent and informal manner to help visitors 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 office does not side with any individual, the University, or other parties involved.

### INDEPENDENT

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

### INFORMALITY

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

## How visitors use us

### POLICY

Visitors seek to understand how the university functions.

### RESOURCES

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

### OPTIONS

Visitors want to know what their options are.

### COACHING

The office consults and coaches visitors with communication concerns between professors, classmates, and staff.

### SPEAK FREELY

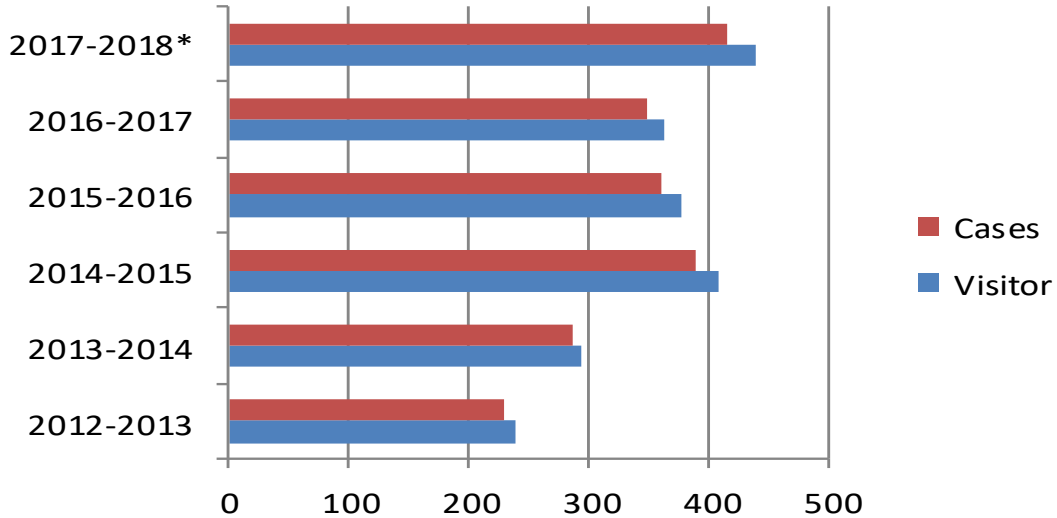
Visitors seek a space to express their frustrations and anxieties about school and work issues.

### LISTENING

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

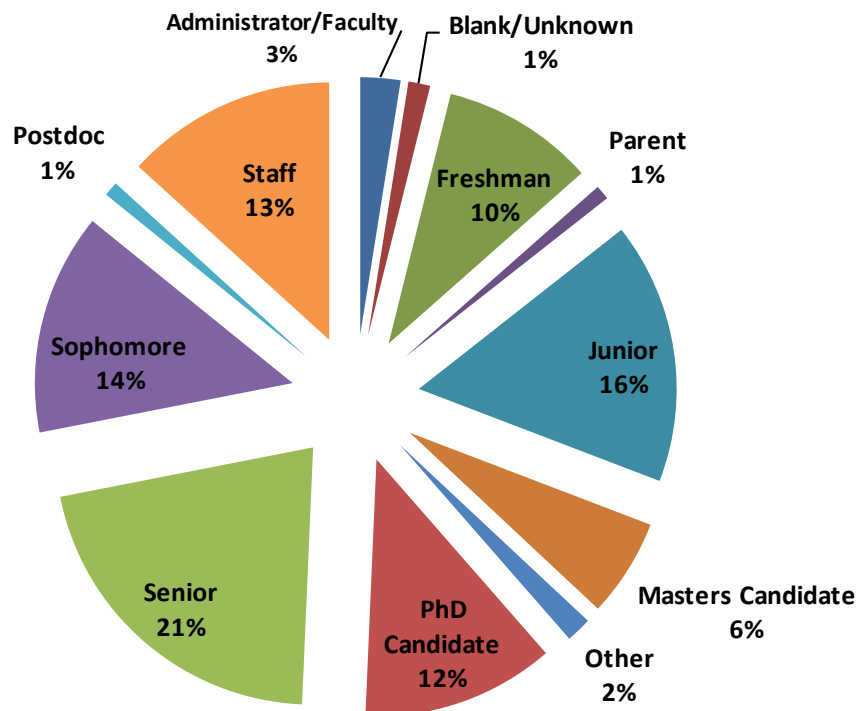
# Visitor Traffic

The office made contact with 1,906 visitors, an increase from the previous year. The office saw 438 visitors with 415 recorded cases, an increase from the previous year. \*Of the 438 visitors 63 were staff, with a recorded 59 cases.



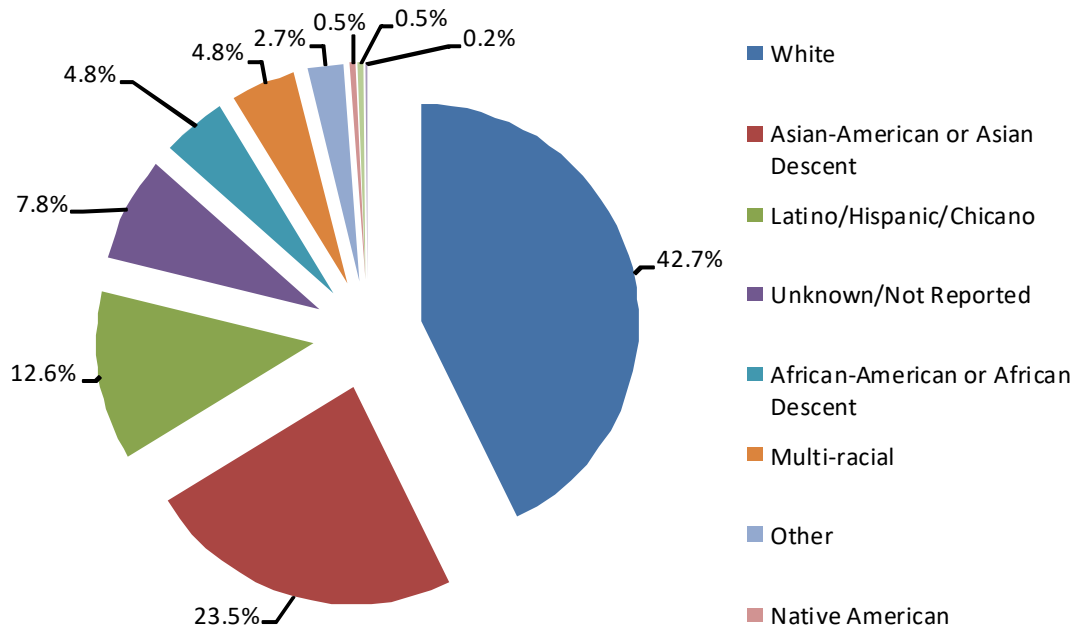
## Who are our visitors?

In 2017 the student and staff ombuds offices combined to form a singular office. Our visitor demographics have changed to include staff and post docs. Our graduate students and seniors continue to make up a large portion of our visitors.



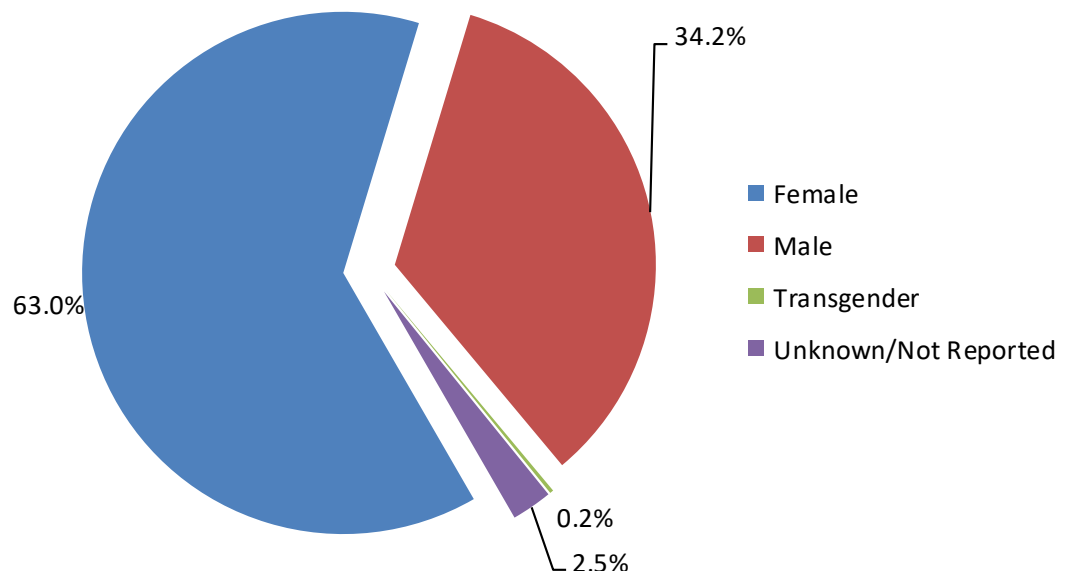
## Visitors by race

A large percent of our visitors identify as white, 42.7%. With the second largest population identified as Asian-American or Asian descent at 23.5%. The demographics mildly correspond with the overall demographics on campus.



## Visitors by gender

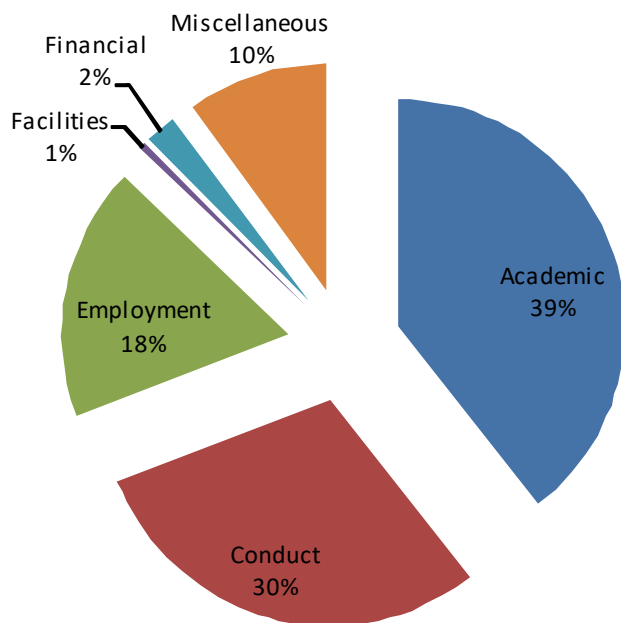
We see more female visitors than male visitors. 63% of our visitors identify as female while 34.2% identify as male.



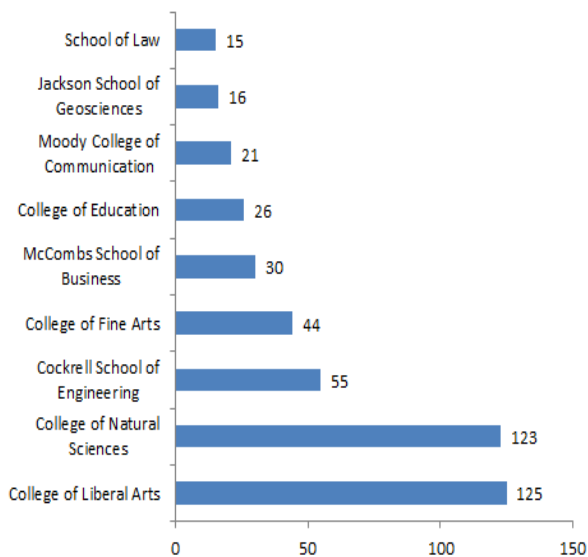
# Visitor Concerns

39% of the visitor's concerns were academic in nature. These cases include grade disputes, syllabus concerns, probation and dismissal, and registration difficulties. Additionally, academic cases include graduate student difficulties with program requirements, faculty advisors, and dissertation committees.

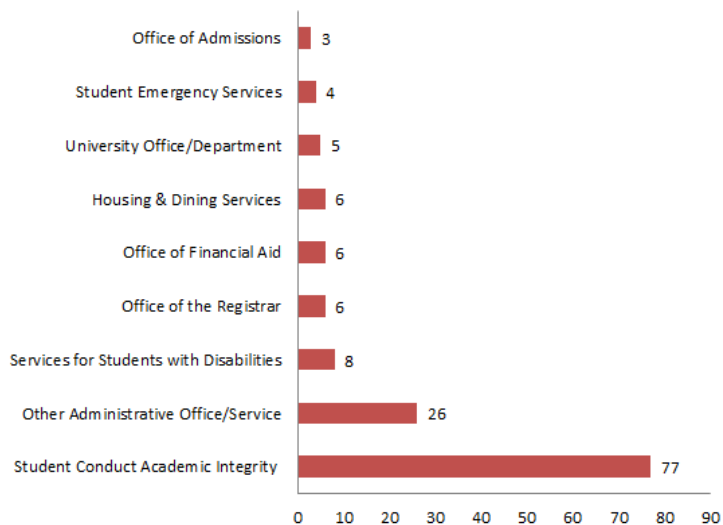
With the inclusion of staff visitors, we saw an increase in the employment related concerns. The issues under employment include: supervision, discrimination, abrasive or toxic behavior, as well as interpersonal conflicts.



# Academic College/Service of Concern



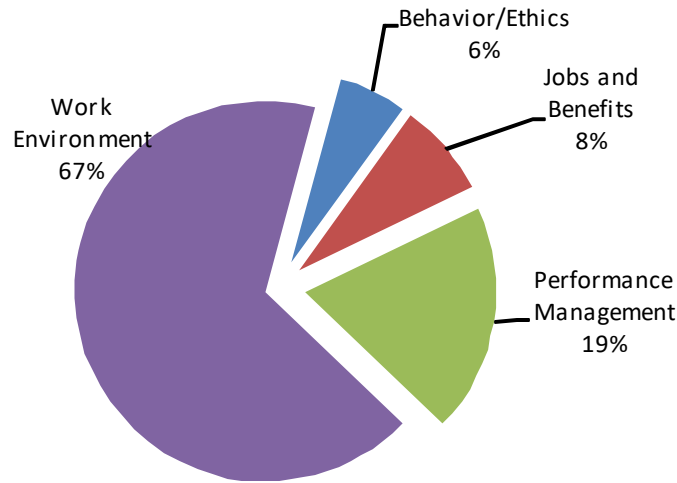
*The other colleges and schools had less than fifteen cases and were not included in the list here*



*Other Offices include but are not limited to libraries, student affairs, writing center, health services, and facilities*

# Staff Concerns

In the first year of visiting with staff on campus, the top categories of concerns were related to work environment, performance management, and jobs and benefits. Within these categories the issues that were raised revolve around interpersonal conflict and conduct of a co-worker or staff member.



## How does the Ombuds help?

The office assists visitors in a variety of ways depending on the concerns. Its categories of assistance include:



Explain Policy/Procedure



Communication Skills



Referrals



Consulting/Coaching

*“This is a great resource to help understand the policies and potential actions. I didn’t have a current case but wanted to learn more and they helped a lot.”*

# Student and Visitor Feedback

The office always strives to improve its services. We welcome any feedback from students and visitors. Here are a few comments from our visitors after meeting with the office.

*“They gave me so much hope and a real solution to help me solve my problem! I feel like they helped me find the tools within the university to help myself!”*

*“Very helpful. Was great to have someone to talk to who’s objective. Provided some good ideas about how to deal with a difficult situation.”*

*“I felt listened to and was given practical tools to implement in my workplace and in my interactions with my manager and colleagues.”*

*“I felt truly heard and supported, which gave me the confidence and perspective I needed in order to sort through all my options. Thanks you!”*

## THE OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY OMBUDS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

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*The Office of the University Ombuds for Students 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, concerns, or complaints. The office functions in an independent and informal manner to help students explore options for effective problem solving and conflict resolution. The office also identifies and provides recommendations to the University regarding systemic issues. The Ombuds advocates 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, Student Honor Code, and University Code of Conduct.*

*The Office of the University Ombuds for Students:*

- Provides students with information, referrals, and assistance with appropriate policies and 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 nonacademic. This includes identification of options, policy clarification, conflict coaching, mediation, training, and other conflict resolution or consultative services as appropriate.

*In order to create a safe place for students to voice concerns, evaluate issues, and identify options, the office maintains privacy and confidentiality to the extent permitted by law and University policy. Additionally, the office is considered an informal and off the record resource, and does not maintain identifying records.*

**The University of Texas at Austin General Information Catalog, 2018-19**