



The University of Texas at Austin Office of the Student Ombuds

2016-2017 Impact Report

Welcome

Ombuds Staff

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Thank you for taking the time to read the 2016-2017 Impact Report. This year has been a transition year for the Office of the Student Ombuds. We've brought on a full-time director and expanded our services. The new services include group facilitation and mediation, tailored workshops for student groups and departments, and increased consultation time. Our goal is to maintain a high level of service for our visitors and provide them varying opportunities to explore their options and find the solution that fits for them.

During this transition year you may notice that our traffic numbers drop however we continue to

seek new ways to outreach to students and the campus. We collaborate with our campus partners in workshops and building positive relationships for increasing student awareness of the ombuds office. Our goal is to normalize the office and integrate it into the Forty Acres so that students feel comfortable accessing our office.

Academic concerns remain high on the nature of concerns for which students utilize the office. Conduct concerns followed in utilization.

We continue to survey students about their stress and confidence levels, and

visitors find it helpful and encouraging in boosting their confidence and lowering their stress levels.

Thank you to our campus partners for helping us and supporting the ombuds program. We look forward to continuing to serve students and the campus community.

With gratitude,

Kouang Chan, J.D.
Director & Student Ombuds

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Summary

Visitors Served:

- * 1622 Visitor Contact
- * 349 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
- * 51% Academic
 - * 28% Conduct

More on page 4

Office Mission

The Office of the Student Ombuds (OSO) 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.

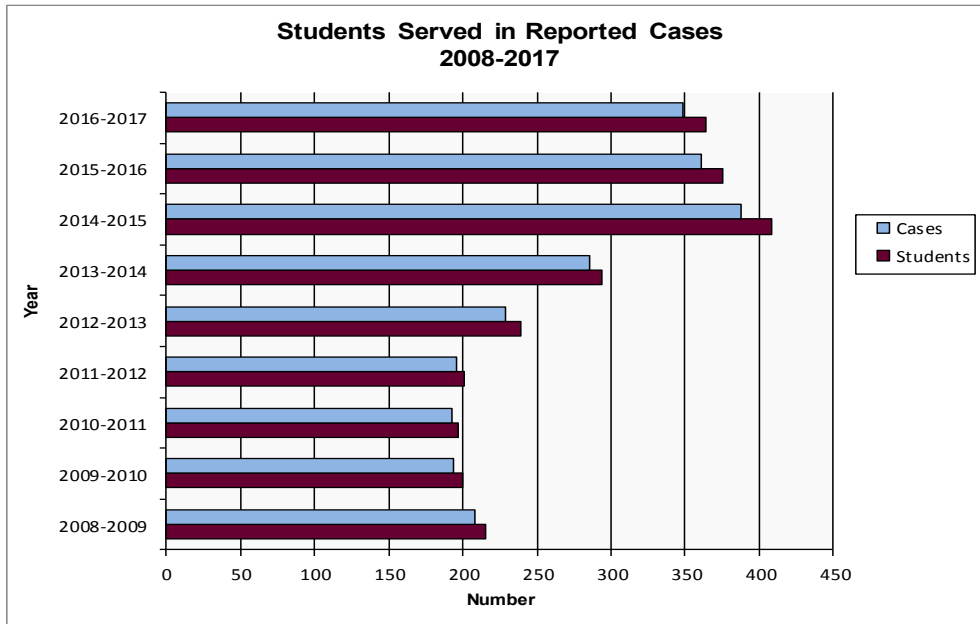
LISTENING

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

Visitor Traffic

The OSO made contact with 1622 visitors, a decrease from the previous year.

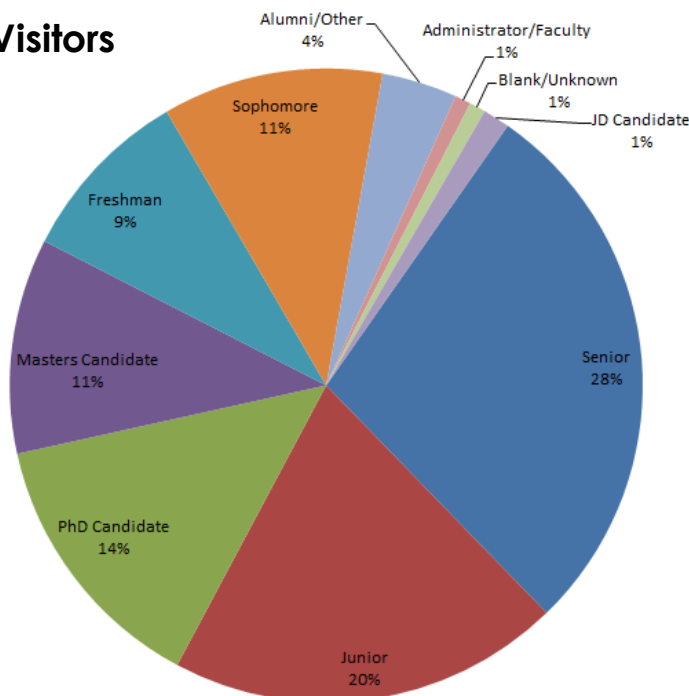
The OSO saw 364 students with 346 recorded cases, a small decrease from the previous year.



Who are our visitors?

A majority of visitors to the OSO are graduate students and seniors. The remainder is spread through the other classifications, faculty, and staff. The OSO also recorded 36 international students using the office.

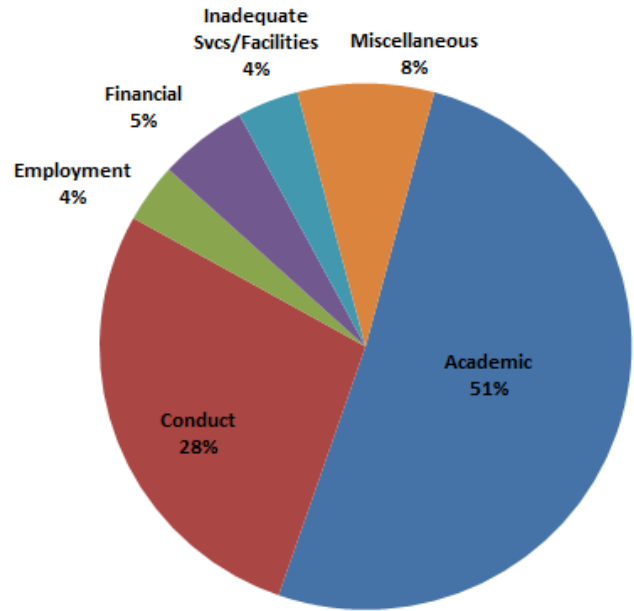
Classification of Visitors



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

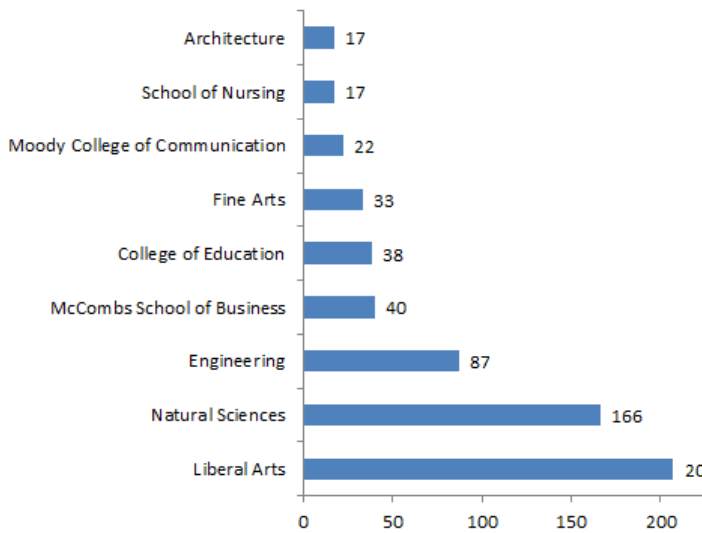
Student Concerns

51% of the office's concerns were academic in nature, a decrease from 59% in 2015-16. 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.



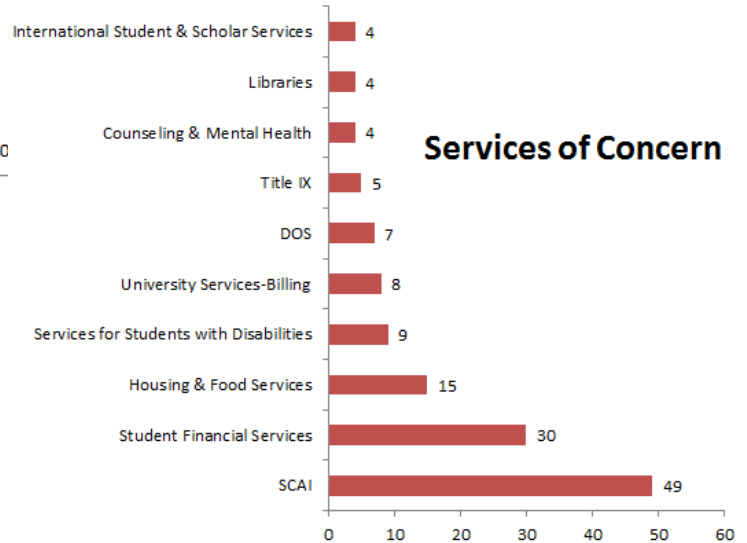
Academic College/Service of Concern

Academic College 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 14 cases.

Other Offices include but are not limited to Athletics, University Health Services, Admissions, and Student Emergency Services



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:



Consulting/Coaching



Explain Policy/Procedure



Communication Skills



Referrals

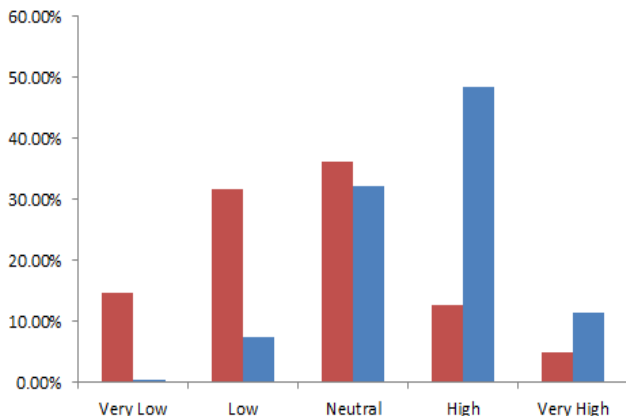
“Very relieving to talk to someone who treated me fairly and was impartial to the solution. Definitely helped relieve some stress.”

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.

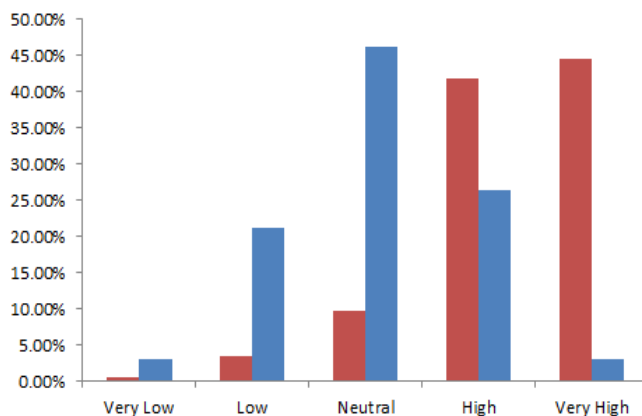
Confidence Levels

BEFORE Visit AFTER Visit



Stress Levels

BEFORE Visit AFTER Visit



Student and Visitor Feedback

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

“Thanks for listening. Really appreciate someone paying attention to my concerns.”

“I felt like there was nothing to do about my issue before I came in and it’s good to know I have options.”

“Thank you for listening and helping me figure out what is best for me, not other people.”

“The Student Ombuds staff is extremely friendly. I was treated with respect and felt much more at ease when I left. I would recommend this office for anyone with concerns or grievances.”

“Very helpful and impartial.”

THE OFFICE OF THE STUDENT OMBUDS

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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