



Annual Report 2021

UNLV Ombuds Office

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Design and layout by David G. Schwartz
Data analysis and visualization by Tifara Rachal

ABOUT THIS REPORT

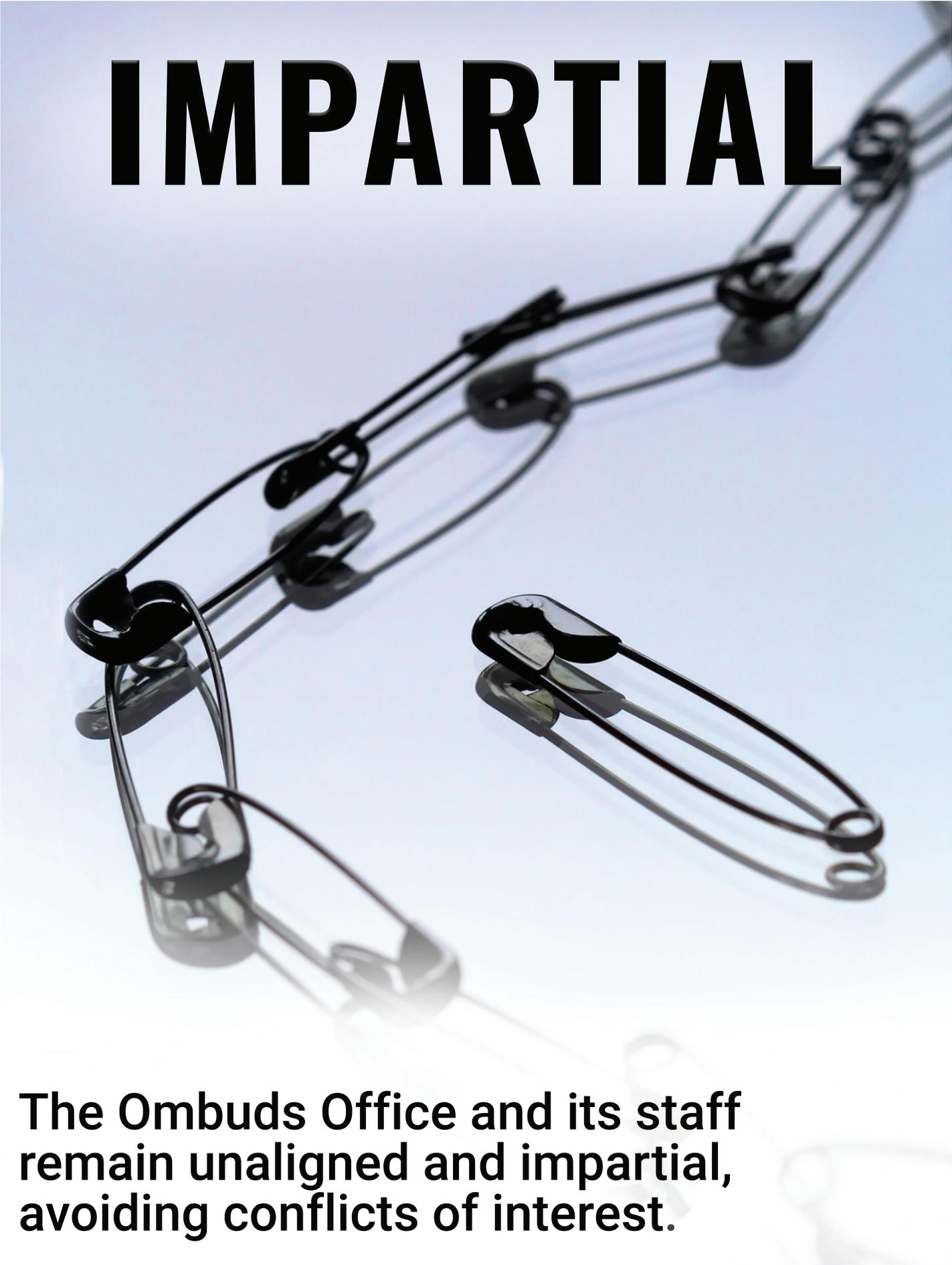
This is the inaugural annual report from UNLV's Ombuds Office, collating information about the renewed office's first seven months of operation, roughly June to December 2021. We anticipate issuing future annual reports in January, sharing highlights about the previous calendar year.

This report is intended to provide a measure of transparency for an office that is cloaked in confidentiality. No individual cases are discussed, nor are specific units or divisions mentioned. Rather, this report offers insights into the aggregate use of the office, as well as its services and functions, for the dual purposes of raising awareness of the services the office provides and demonstrating the office's value to UNLV.

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IMPARTIAL

A chain of several silver paper clips is draped across the upper half of the image, with one paper clip lying separately below it. The background is a light blue gradient.

The Ombuds Office and its staff remain unaligned and impartial, avoiding conflicts of interest.

WHAT IS THE OMBUDS OFFICE?

Reconstituted by President Keith E. Whitfield effective June 1, 2021, the Ombuds Office serves as a resource for all campus employees.

The Ombuds Office provides an alternative to other dispute resolution mechanisms on campus. For those who have an issue but are unsure of where to take it, the Ombuds Office is an ideal “first stop” where they can explore their options in an informal, confidential, and zero-barrier environment.

Adhering to the International Ombuds Association Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, the Ombuds Office and all of its employees embrace the four core values of the organizational ombuds profession. As stated in the IOA Code of Ethics, these are:

INDEPENDENCE

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

NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY

The Ombuds, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombuds does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Ombuds holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

INFORMALITY

The Ombuds, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.

Practicing to IOA standards, the Ombuds Office is a space where visitors can be confident that their concerns are heard by a neutral and independent party, and their privacy is protected by confidentiality. The informality of the office makes it possible to raise concerns without starting a formal investigative or administrative process, which is ideal for employees who are not sure how they want to proceed and are more comfortable exploring options other than initiating a course of action.

At the same time, IOA standards place limits on what the Ombuds can do. As a neutral, impartial, party, the Ombuds does not advocate for individuals or determine right or wrong in a conflict. Due to the confidentiality of the office, the Ombuds doesn't accept notice on behalf of the university. As an organizational ombuds, the Ombuds cannot overrule the decisions of others at UNLV or create, eliminate, or alter policies or regulations adopted at any level.

The Ombuds' value, rather, is to provide a safe space for all employees to discuss their concerns, evaluating potential options. The Ombuds is also available to act as an impartial facilitator for individuals and groups who find themselves in a conflict they are unable to resolve internally.

Visitors to the Ombuds Office and participants in Ombuds programs can learn and practice conflict resolution techniques and gain confidence in their abilities to manage conflict and effectively self-advocate.

The Ombuds is also well-placed to report systemic issues and areas of concern to campus leadership.

The office serves all UNLV employees, including full-time and part-time, classified staff, administrative faculty, academic faculty, executive administrative faculty, and, in their role as employees, graduate and undergraduate students.

THE OMBUDS TEAM



The Ombuds Office is staffed by David G. Schwartz, Ombuds, and Tifara Rachal, Administrative Assistant.

Before assuming the role of Ombuds in June 2021, Dr. Schwartz served as Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. Previous to that, he directed the Center for Gaming Research in the University Libraries. A native of Atlantic City, New Jersey and a first generation college student, his areas of academic interest include the history of gaming and casinos, Las Vegas, video games, conspiracy theories, and conflict resolution. At UNLV since 2001, he was awarded tenure and promotion to associate professor in 2006 and promotion to professor in 2013. He has completed the International Ombuds Association's Foundations course, and is pursuing the IOA's Certified Organizational Ombuds Practitioner certification.

Tifara Rachal, who has been with the Ombuds Office since September 2021, previously provided primary administrative support for the Clinical Sciences department of UNLV's School of Dental Medicine. She brings with her decades of experience as an administrative professional and has thus far proven herself well-equipped to support and maintain the Ombuds Office to the IOA standards of practice. Ms. Rachal, generally your first point of contact with the Ombuds Office, manages scheduling visitor appointments with the Ombuds, and coordinates Ombuds-related activities and meetings with units across the university. She also serves as the secretary of UNLV's Classified Staff Council.

SERVICES

The Ombuds Office provides four primary services to the UNLV employee community.

1. Listening

The Ombuds will hear you and your concerns, in a confidential and non-judgmental manner.

Because the office is confidential, visitors can feel free to express a range of thoughts, emotions, and frustrations with no fear of retaliation. The only times when the Ombuds or staff can breach confidentiality are when unreported child or elder abuse issues are surfaced, they determine that there is an imminent risk of serious harm, or the visitor gives express permission to waive confidentiality.

By providing a neutral, confidential, zero barrier, and risk-free space to discuss difficult situations, the Ombuds Office can support better resolutions of those situations.

2. Education

The Ombuds can help you better understand your rights, responsibilities, and options, and offer one-on-one and group coaching and training.

The education function starts with individual discussions about the options that are available for you and the spectrum of possible outcomes. The Ombuds will not tell you “what to do,” but he can talk you through several scenarios. In any event, there is usually not one single “best” course of action, but rather a range of responses, some of which, based on your appetite for risk and willingness to invest time/emotion into the conflict, may be better for you.

Education also includes conflict coaching, which provides resources for individuals to better engage in conflict.

Finally, the Ombuds Office offers unit-based group coaching and educational sessions. These can be tailored to the needs of a specific department, but also include general conflict resolution strategies for a broad audience. For more information, see pages 8-9.

3. Mediation

The Ombuds Office’s facilitative mediation practice provides a place for voluntary, informal, and confidential dispute resolution.

For more information on mediation, see the **Spotlight on: Mediation** on this page.

4. Change Advocacy

The Ombuds Office takes part in assessment efforts and provides information on system issue to campus leadership.

As an office that receives concerns from across campus, the Ombuds is situated to share trends with campus leaders without compromising the confidentiality of those who visit it.

SPOTLIGHT ON: MEDIATION

Mediation is a voluntary, structured, but informal process of conflict resolution. Facilitative mediation, as practiced under the aegis of the Ombuds Office, encourages reconciliation and finding a way forward versus assigning blame or exacting retribution, which makes it ideal for mitigating several varieties of workplace conflict. Conducted confidentially, outside of formal dispute channels, and amenable to creative problem solving, mediation presents a viable alternative to other grievance/complaint processes.

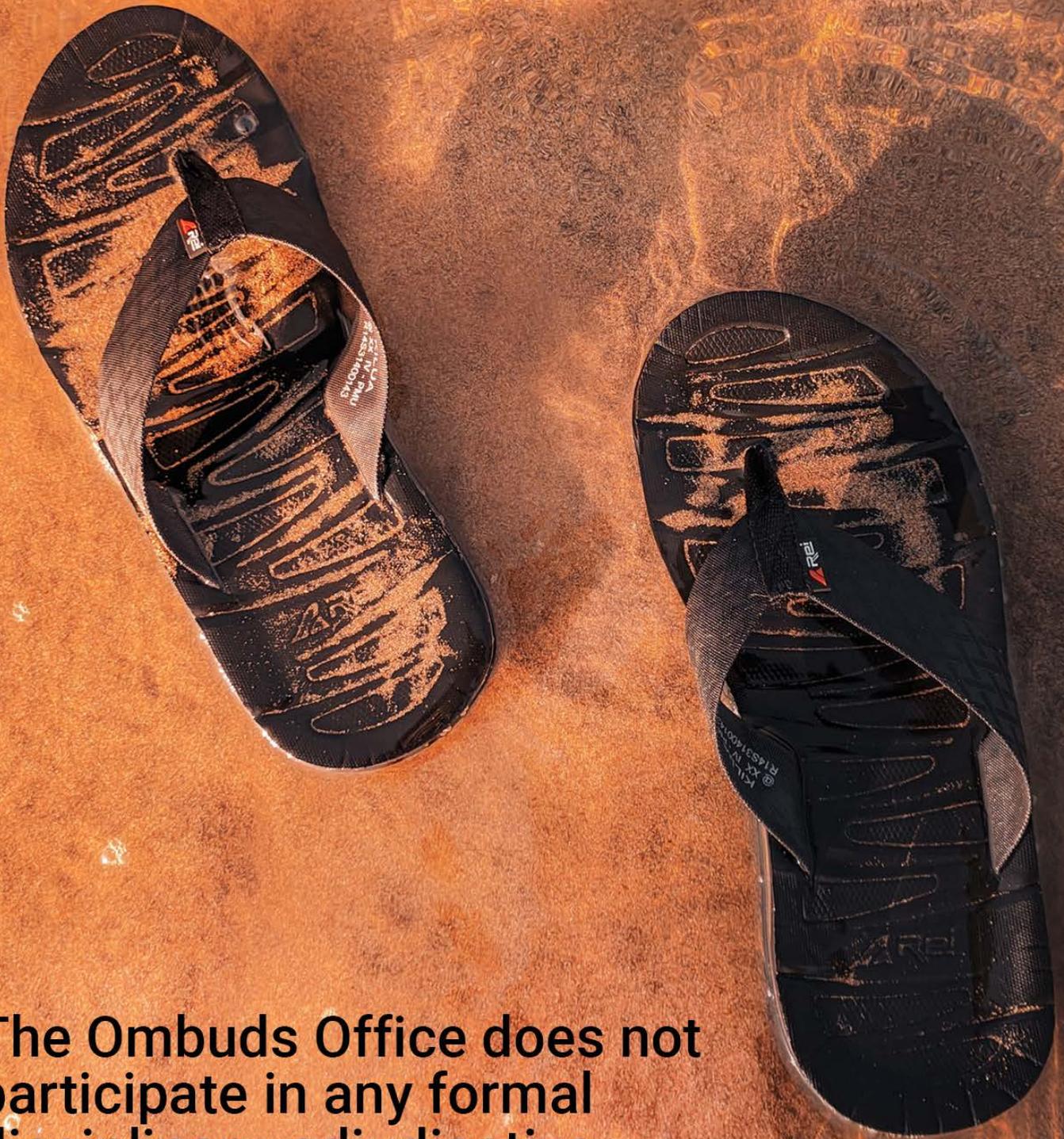
The mediation practice uses a co-mediator model, with two mediators guiding each session. To broaden the representation of the mediation roster, the Ombuds Office has created a pool of potential mediators, composed of volunteers from across campus (campus mediators) and advanced students at the William S. Boyd School of Law (practitioner mediators). All mediators are graduates of the Boyd School of Law’s 40-hour “Basic Mediation Essentials” Course, which prepares students for practicing mediation in a variety of settings.

Members of the mediation pool in 2021 included:

- Lus Cruz (Campus Mediator)
- Anne Hanson (Practitioner Mediator)
- Yvonne Houy (Campus Mediator)
- Liane Lee (Campus Mediator)
- David G. Schwartz (Ombuds)
- Ted Weisman (Campus Mediator)

During a mediation session, the parties first explain what brought them into conflict, and, guided by the mediators, move towards discussing potential resolutions. With the parties themselves suggesting and ultimately agreeing on their resolution, there is a high potential for continued “buy-in” and sustainable future engagement.

INFORMAL



The Ombuds Office does not participate in any formal disciplinary, adjudicative, or administrative proceedings.

MILESTONES

Over its first seven months, Ombuds Office staff worked to meet three primary goals. First, staff needed to set up the office. This entailed furnishing the physical location and creating procedures governing its operations. Drafting, revising, and getting the approval of the Ombuds Charter falls within this area, as does creating the Ombuds website and setting up the mediation practice.

Second, staff needed to spread awareness of the office, its purpose, and its services. To this end, from June to December, 2021, the Ombuds met with:

- 18 deans
- 16 college-level executive committees
- All members of the President’s Cabinet
- 19 meetings with unit leadership or staff groups

We substantially completed this first phase of awareness raising, meeting with senior leadership, by November. Next, the office began coordinating with units around campus: academic departments and administrative work groups. Over the balance of the year, the Ombuds met with seven campus units. The Ombuds also undertook other outreach activities, such as the events of Ombuds Week (see opposite).

Third, the Ombuds began serving the campus by meeting one-on-one with employees. These were typically employees bringing concerns who had either approached the office on their own or who had been referred by leadership or other sources on campus. Once the office became fully operational with the addition of Tifara Rachal in September, the Ombuds averaged over forty contacts per month—a robust workload for a university ombuds. Supplementing these individual appointments, the Ombuds led six facilitated conversations, which are structured discussions driven by the concerns of a unit and moderated by the Ombuds (see page 11 for more information).

By the end of the year, the office was on firm organizational footing, with a solid foundation for continuing its mission to serve all UNLV employees, helping them address their concerns in an equitable manner.



OMBUDS WEEK

Ombuds Day is an international annual day of recognition for the ombuds profession organized by the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution. In 2021, the theme of Ombuds Day was “Exploring Options to Resolve Conflict Together.”

To raise awareness of the Ombuds Office on campus, and to celebrate the work that ombuds do worldwide, UNLV’s Ombuds Office hosted a week of activities illustrating the broad range of ways that the office can assist with informal conflict resolution.

Ombuds Week events included:

An open house at the Ombuds Office (FDH 165), with refreshments and prizes for participants

A group discussion moderated by Dr. Anne Stevens (chair of the Department of Interdisciplinary, Gender, and Ethnic Studies) about the Netflix Dramey The Chair

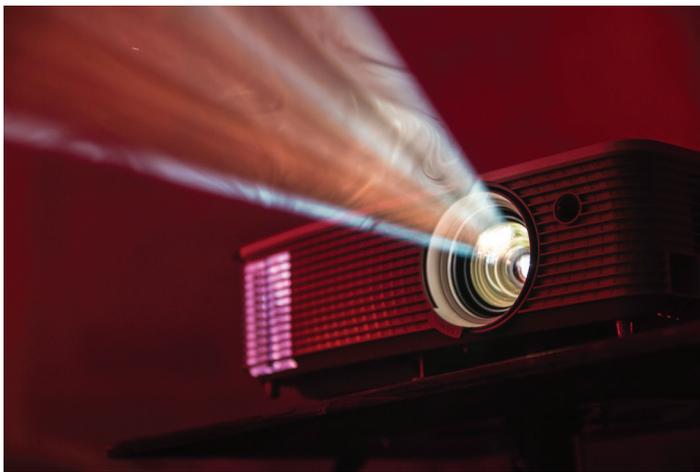
An interactive role play session exploring conflict styles and, how different styles can exacerbate and de-escalate conflict through two role play scenarios.

A game break conducted in collaboration with Dr. Tina Vo (Teaching and Learning), featuring four fast-paced, quick-play board games in which players cooperate, collaborate, and compete

PROGRAMS

In order to promote positive conflict resolution across campus, the Ombuds Office delivers several customizable programs, seminars, and workshops to groups across campus. A unit, department, or other collective can request a program that fits with their current needs, and which can be scheduled to maximize attendance and impact.

Programs are typically 20 to 90 minutes, and are customized for each audience. Some of the programs currently available include:



Informational Sessions

These presentations explain the purpose of the Ombuds Office and describe its functions.

Introduction to the Ombuds Office

This brief presentation discusses the role of an organizational ombuds, addresses some common misconceptions about what ombuds do and don't do, details the services that the Ombuds Office provides at UNLV, and explains how to contact the office. All questions answered. (Typical time: 15-30 minutes)

Facilitative Mediation and Dispute Resolution

You may have a problem in your area, and are curious about how facilitative mediation--a service offered by the Ombuds Office--can help. This brief session explains how mediation sessions typically run, what work parties can do beforehand, and what sorts of outcomes they can anticipate. (Typical time: 20-30 minutes)

Interactive Conflict Resolution

These sessions, which are fully interactive, allow participants to get a feel for different conflict styles and types and explore different methods of resolving disputes.

Understanding Conflict Drivers: Different Causes, Common Dynamics

In this interactive presentation, we explore five common conflict drivers, and get a window into how understanding the drivers can lead to better conflict resolution. This workshop includes participatory role play scenarios. (Typical time: 45-60 minutes)

Conflict Coaching: Techniques for Individuals to Manage Conflict Better

Sometimes you may feel that, for a variety of reasons, you are unable to speak openly enough with those you are in conflict with to pursue mediation or other dyadic methods of resolving your issues. In these cases, you may benefit from conflict coaching, an approach that arms individuals with better strategies to manage conflict. This session, which includes interactive scenarios, walks participants through selected techniques and provides a glimpse into what one-on-one conflict coaching looks like. (40-60 minutes)

Exploring Conflict Styles: An Interactive Roleplay

Prior to this session, all participants will take an online assessment that will determine their preferred Thomas-Kilmann conflict style. After a brief introduction to Thomas and Kilmann's theory, we break into small groups to role play a series of scenarios and further discuss how conflict styles can exacerbate disagreements and complicate productive resolutions. (Typical time: 60-90 minutes, 75 minutes preferred)

Resolving Conflicts with Students (for faculty/staff)

You may be seeing conflicts among students in your classroom or student group, or find yourself in conflict with one or multiple students. This interactive session discusses a few of the most common types of student conflicts, provides techniques for resolving conflicts for students, and informs participants about resources for faculty or staff who find themselves a party to a conflict with or between students. (Typical time: 60 minutes)

Resolving Conflicts in the Classroom (for student groups)

As a student, you may have a problem with your instructor or fellow students. This interactive session walks you through a few common classroom conflict

scenarios, explains a few techniques to use to resolve conflicts productively, and provides resources for those who find themselves in conflict. (Typical time: 60 minutes)

How Bugsy Blew It: Leadership Lesson from a Made Man

You've heard of Bugsy Siegel and the Flamingo Casino. The innovative gangster who invented modern Las Vegas and paid the price. The reality is trickier: Benjamin Siegel's tenure at the Flamingo was marked by ambition, envy, and incompetence, and the casino seems to have succeeded in spite, not because of, him. This interactive seminar breaks down the seven leadership mistakes Siegel made, and suggests seven ways you can do better.

Difficult Conversations: How to Make Them Less Painful and More Productive

You might need to speak with a colleague about behaviors that are making your job harder. Or a supervisor about performance expectations that you think are unreasonable. Or a subordinate who is under-performing. Whatever the subject, this will not be an easy conversation to have. This session, which includes interactive scenarios, will prepare you to have a variety of difficult conversations. (Typical time: 60-90 minutes)

Conflict and Cooperation: Game Break

In this fun, interactive session, Professor Tina Vo (Teaching and Learning) shares a selection of easy-to-learn, quick board games that will help your group explore how they can achieve individual and team goals by working together--or separately. (Typical time: 60-90 minutes)

FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS

Sometimes, groups know that they have an issue, but struggle with how to most fully raise and resolve those issues internally. These sessions give groups a chance to discuss important subjects and tackle crucial issues with the help of a trained facilitator.

Communication: Setting Ground Rules for Productive Conversations

It's not uncommon for both small and large groups to suffer a communications breakdown. There is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution for getting back to open, productive conversations. In this guided group exercise, you will develop mutually agreed-upon ground rules for what respectful and appropriate communication looks like. (Typical time: 90 minutes)

Discussing Our Problems Together: A Guided Conversation

Your area may agree that it is facing one or more problems, and feels that the most productive way to tackle these issues is to bring in an outside facilitator. Before the session begins, the Ombuds Office will meet with all participants and solicit information about the nature of the difficulty and potential solutions, and will present this information without attribution to start the in-person (or remote) discussion, leading to a productive conversation. A resolution in one session is not guaranteed, but having a guided, respectful discussion will be a step in the right direction. (Typical time: 90-120 minutes per session)

For more information on how these sessions are structured, please see page 11.



INDEPENDENT

**The Ombuds Office
is independent in
structure, function,
and appearance.**



WEBSITE

The Ombuds Office website, <https://www.unlv.edu/ombuds>, provides an online gateway to a range of Ombuds services and programs. Visitors to the site can learn about what an Ombuds is, what the office does, and how to get in touch.

During its months of operation in 2021, the website got 2,598 hits. The top pages were the main page, the “For the Ombuds” blog, “People” (office staff), the mediation page, and the contact page.

With no previous data for comparison, it is difficult to draw conclusions about how effective the website is, but this will continue to be a primary avenue for the Ombuds Office to share information in 2022.

CHARTER

In accordance with the International Ombuds Association’s Standards of Practice, the Ombuds Office operates under the aegis of its charter, which has been approved of by senior university leaders and signed by President Whitfield.

The charter introduces the office, outlines its structure, and describes its operations before defining its authority and limits to authority. Written in reference to International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice, the charter explains the nature and function of the office, finishing with a declaration of the importance of confidentiality to the operation of the office, with notes on the two potential exceptions to that principle: when a party gives specific consent to make a disclosure, or when the Ombuds has a reasonable basis to determine that there is an imminent risk of serious harm.

The Ombuds and all Ombuds Office staff are bound to practice to the specifications and within the confines of the charter.

ADVISORY PANEL

Following Ombuds best practices, the UNLV Ombuds Office has assembled an advisory panel. The panel, whose members are selected by their constituencies, has a dual role. First, the panel members can relay concerns and suggestions about the operation of the office from their constituents to the Ombuds. Second, the panel helps to spread word about the Ombuds Office with their constituency.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS

A Facilitated Conversation led by the Ombuds is an ideal tool for units grappling with everything from discrete initiatives to major operational and existential challenges. They succeed when both leadership and staff are open to hearing new perspectives and committed to making changes based on what they discover.

Step One: Background

The process begins with the Ombuds meeting one-on-one with all members of the unit (including leadership), getting background on the unit and answering questions about the process.

Step Two: Questions

The Ombuds Office will send out a brief survey to all unit members, asking them to discuss the unit’s issues and potential solutions.

Step Three: Sharing

The Office will share, without attribution, the information solicited in step two, with the unit.

Step Four: The Discussion

At the discussion (usually two hours), the agenda is determined by the feedback given by the unit, with an emphasis on finding workable solutions to the issues at hand. The unit itself, not the Ombuds or other external figures, will agree on solutions, or methods for arriving at them. If no easy solutions are agreed upon, leadership and staff will be asked what they can do over the next 30 days to move the conversation forward.

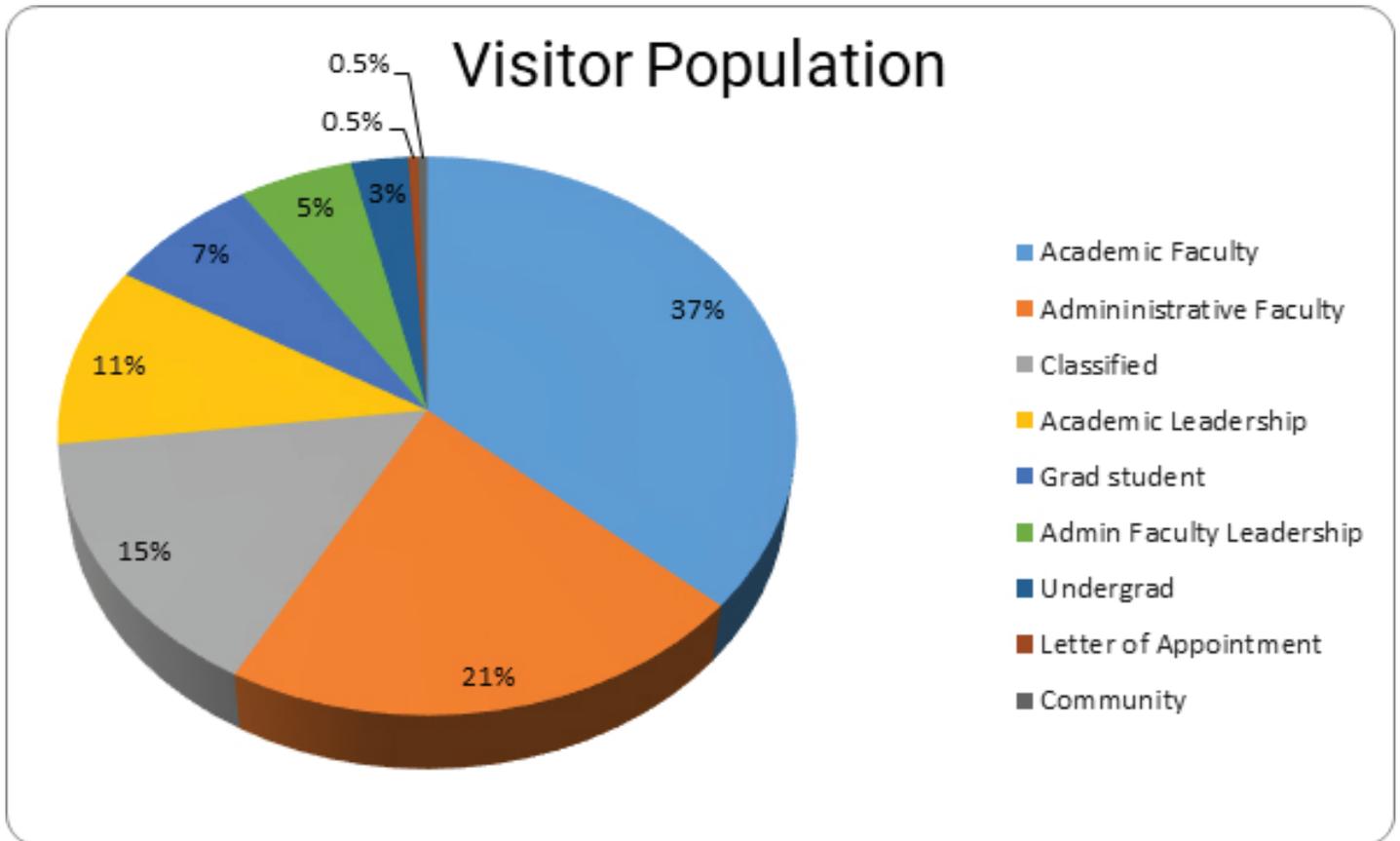
Step Five: The Follow-Up

After the discussion the Ombuds Office will immediately solicit your feedback on how effective the experience was. The Office will also share a summary of the discussion and/or agreements reached. Finally, the Ombuds will follow up with leadership to discuss next steps, including the implementation of any changes and the possibility of future follow-up sessions.

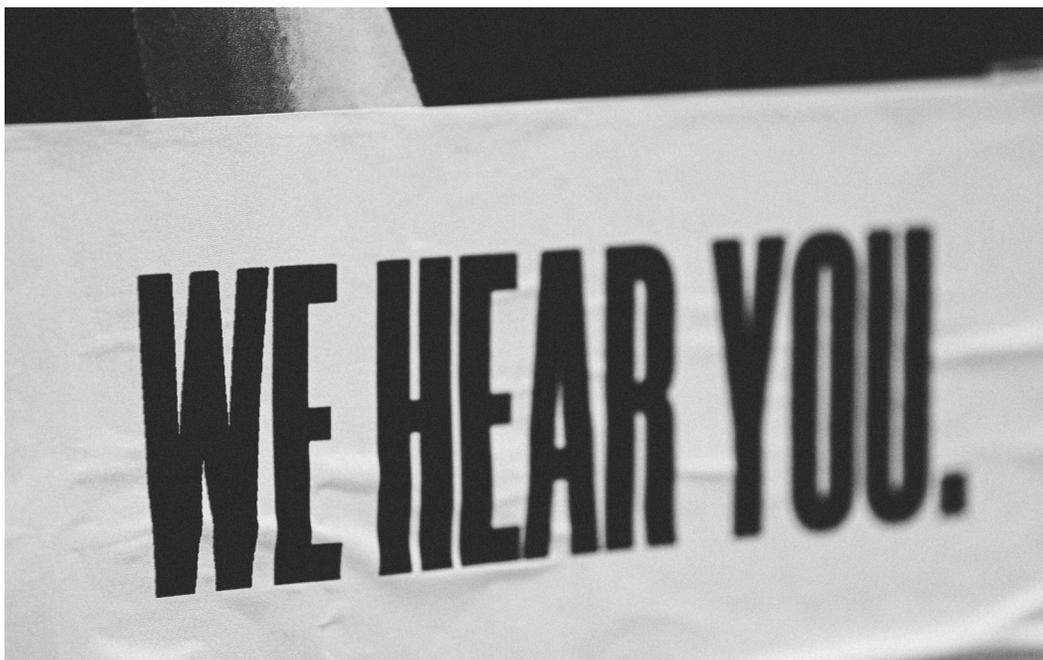
To date, multiple units have found facilitated conversations to be productive, positive instruments for planning a better future. The Ombuds can customize them to suit a variety of needs and dynamics.

VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS

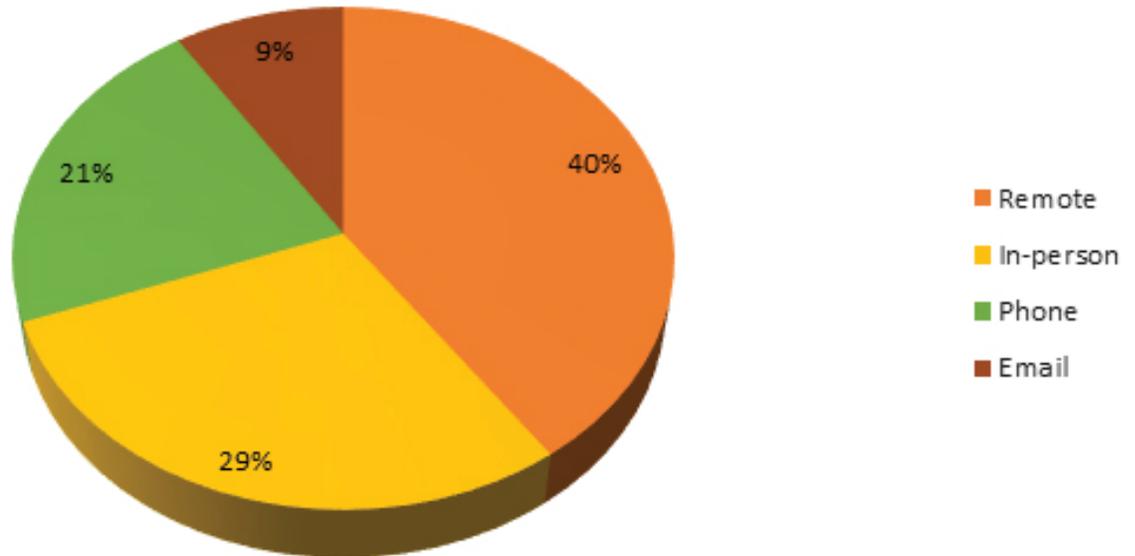
Demographic and statistical information collected at the time of visitor contacts reveals the diverse range of visitors to the office and modes of interaction.



Academic faculty represented the largest group of contacts (37 percent), with administrative faculty next at 21 percent. Classified staff made 15 percent of contacts Graduate students, academic faculty leaders (i.e., chairs, deans, associate deans, etc.) and administrative faculty leaders (directors, vice presidents, assistant vice presidents, etc.) made up substantial numbers.

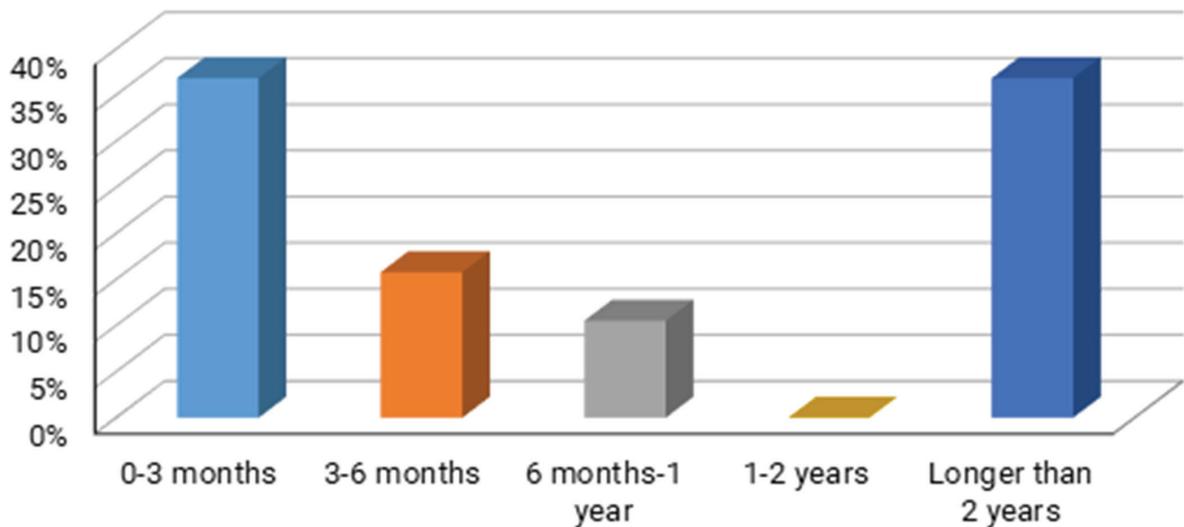


Method of Contact



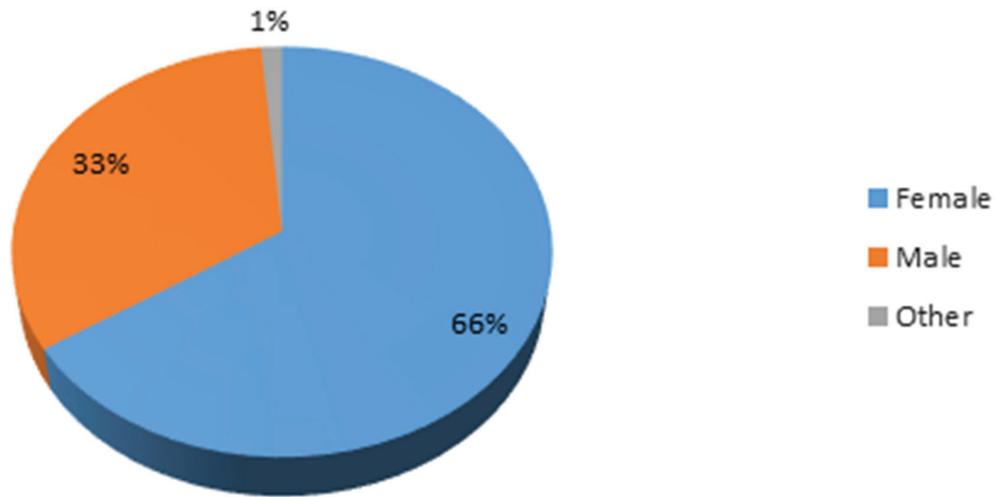
Visitors found a variety of ways to interact with the Ombuds, with most (40 percent) choosing to meet remotely via Google Meet. In-person meetings represented 29 percent of contacts, with phone calls responsible for 21 percent. Nine percent of contacts were via email, although substantive correspondence over email is discouraged, as email is not an appropriate medium for confidential conversations.

Length of time conflict has been ongoing



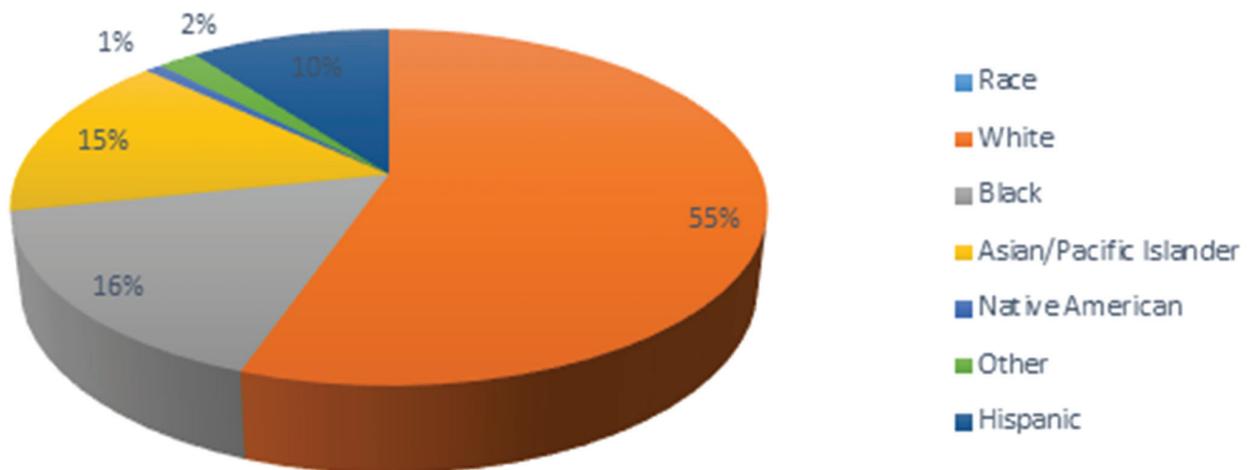
Conflicts that brought visitors to the office had a bimodal distribution, with roughly equal proportions coming soon after a conflict was identified (0-3 months) and long after it started (longer than two years).

Gender



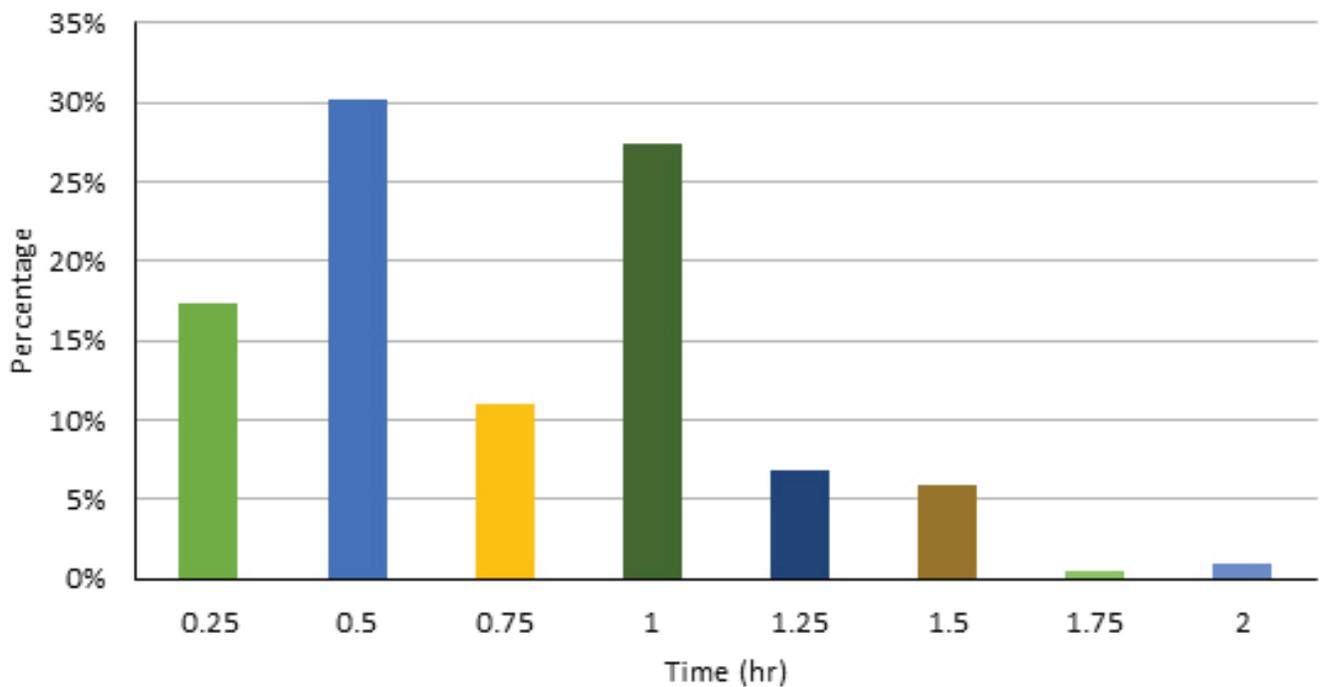
Women represented 66 percent of contacts, with men and “other” comprising the balance. Women are over-represented far in excess of the 54/46 percent female/male gender split among all UNLV employees.

Race/Ethnicity



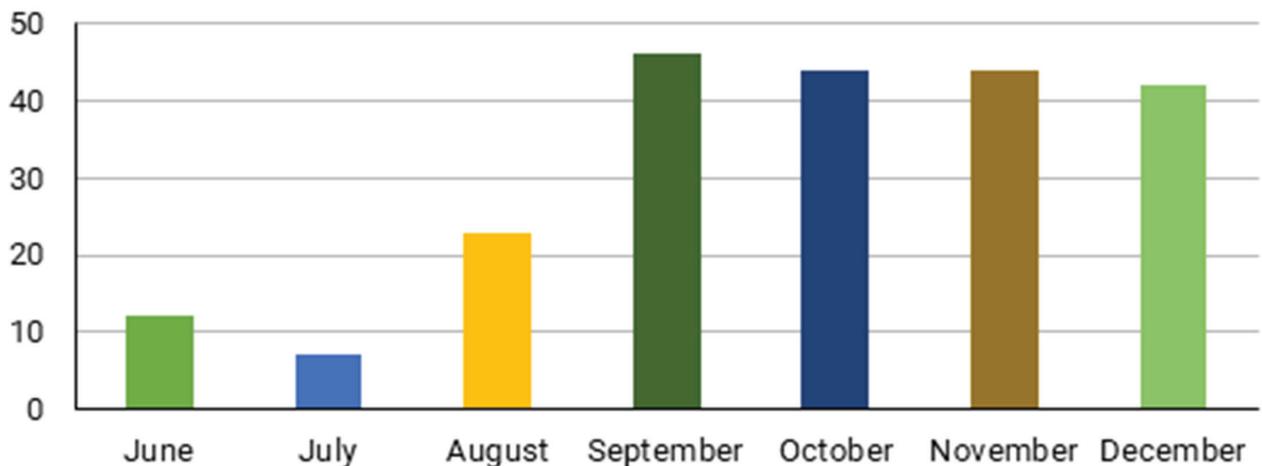
With regard to race and ethnicity, white and black employees were slightly overrepresented in contacts when compared to the total UNLV employee population, with Hispanic employees slightly underrepresented, and Asian and Pacific Islanders proportionally present.

Length of Appointment



Most visitors spent 30 minutes or one hour speaking with the Ombuds, with 15-minute meetings another popular option, and some sessions as long as two hours.

Contacts by Month, 2021



Since September, contacts have remained at over 40 per month, reflecting the increased awareness of the Ombuds Office throughout campus and a growing willingness to utilize the office.

CONFIDENTIAL



The Ombuds Office holds all communications in the strictest confidence, and protects the confidentiality of its visitors.

ISSUES REPORTED

For reporting purposes (including this annual report), the Ombuds tracks concerns brought to his attention. These records are kept in such a way that no individually identifiable information is associated with any record. Further, these records are never released except in the aggregate.

Following International Ombuds Association best practices, the Ombuds logs those concerns using the IOA's Uniform Reporting Categories, which classify common issues brought to ombuds offices into nine general divisions:

1. Compensation & Benefits
2. Evaluative Relationships
3. Peer and Colleague Relationships
4. Career Progression and Development
5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance
6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment
7. Services/Administrative Issues
8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related
9. Values, Ethics, and Standards

Within those divisions, concerns are further sorted into dozens of discrete classifications. For example, an issue relating to an employee's benefits is classified as 1.c; a concern about retaliation against an employee by their supervisor is 2.h; bullying or mobbing by peers is 3.f; an issue related to reappointment, tenure, or promotion is 4.e.

One visitor may report multiple concerns, in which case multiple codes are recorded.

In general, the most common issues (see "Top Ten," opposite) were around communication and respect, particularly between supervisors and subordinates, with career progression and climate as other notable concerns. This echoes concerns raised in campus-wide climate surveys, like 2019's Great Colleges to Work For.

In total, issues raised by visitors fell into 51 separate categories, suggesting that the Ombuds Office is viewed as a resource for those facing a range of issues.

TOP TEN

The top ten issues raised with the Ombuds were:

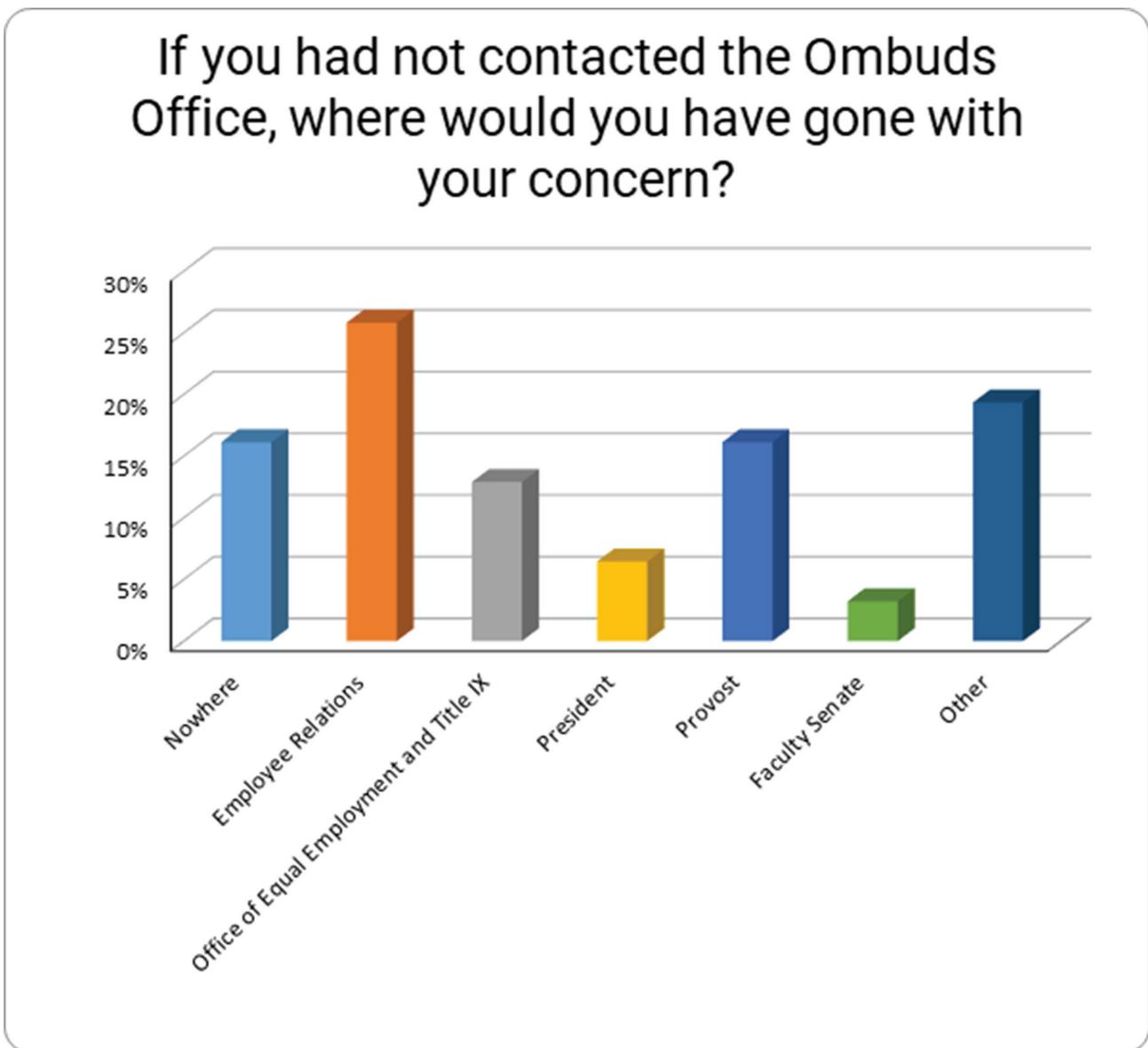
Evaluative Relationships:	11%
Communication <i>Quality and/or quantity of communication</i>	
Evaluative Relationships:	10%
Respect/Treatment <i>Demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.</i>	
Career Progression and Development:	8%
Career Progression <i>Promotion, reappointment, or tenure</i>	
Evaluative Relationships:	6%
Priorities, Values, and Beliefs <i>Differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs</i>	
Evaluative Relationships:	5%
Trust/Integrity <i>Suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.</i>	
Evaluative Relationships:	5%
Departmental Climate <i>Prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility</i>	
Peer and Colleague Relationships:	4%
Communication <i>Quality and/or quantity of communication</i>	
Peer and Colleague Relationships:	4%
Respect/Treatment <i>Demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.</i>	
Services/Administrative Issues:	4%
Quality of Services <i>How well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.</i>	
Organizational, Strategic, Mission:	3%
Organizational Climate <i>Issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning</i>	

FEEDBACK

Visitors to the office are asked to take a voluntary, anonymous feedback survey after their appointment. The following statements were collected from anonymous feedback left by visitors to the office. This was to measure how effective the office was at serving the campus community and to suggest potential changes or additions to the services the office offers.

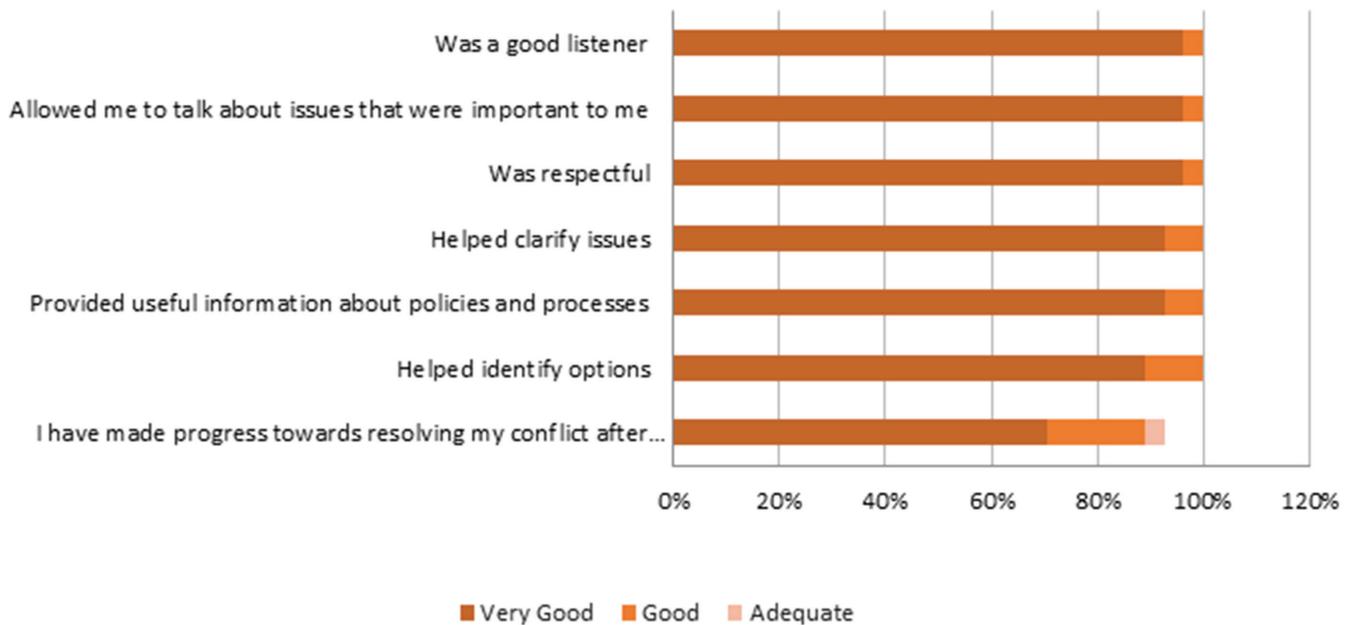
The feedback solicited is intended to measure three primary areas: first, where would visitors have gone without the Ombuds? Second, how effective has the office been in delivering its services? Third, how satisfied are employees with the office?

Surveys filled out to date suggest that the Ombuds is already filling an important role on campus, is functioning effectively, and is serving the campus community well.



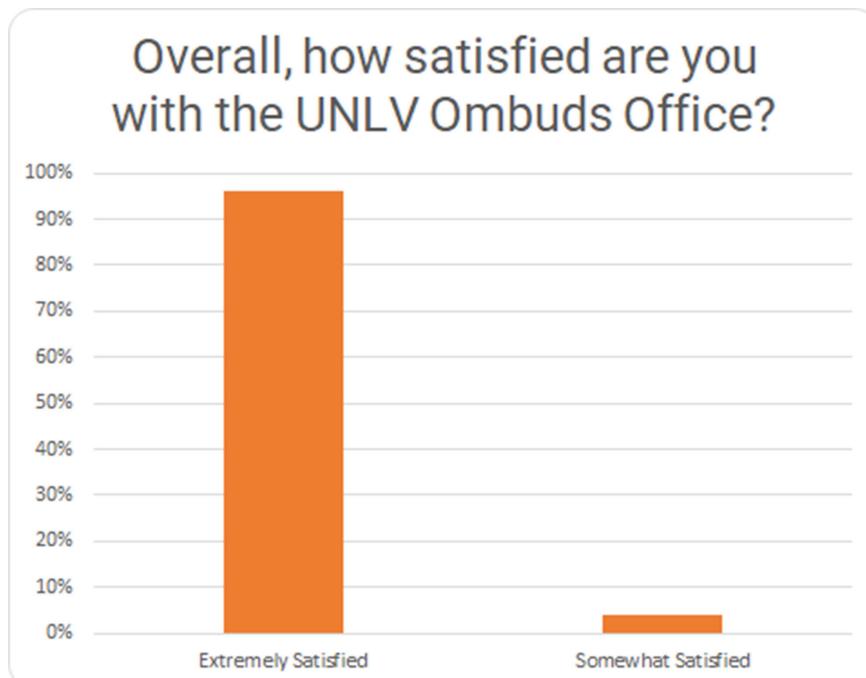
Visitors were asked what they would have done to attempt resolution if the Ombuds Office did not exist. There was no consensus here, although 25 percent indicated that they would have contacted Employee Relations, with a smaller but substantial number either doing nothing or addressing their concern to the Provost or Office of Equal Employment and Title IX, A smaller percentage would have approached the President or Faculty Senate.

Visitor Feedback - Ombuds (or Representative)



Visitors rated their experience with the Ombuds on a five point scale with regard to several dimensions of their interaction. The responses have been extremely positive; all respondents felt that the Ombuds was “very good” or “good” at listening, allowing the visitors to talk about issues important to them, being respectful, clarifying issues, providing useful information, and identifying options.

While still overwhelmingly positive, visitors were the least satisfied with making progress towards solving their conflict after speaking with the Ombuds, with a small percentage rating that as only “adequate.”



In response to the question, “Overall, how satisfied are you with the UNLV Ombuds Office?” most respondents selected 5 (on a scale of 1-5), with an overall score of 4.96, indicating that visitors are, in sum, extremely satisfied with their experiences at the office.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

In addition to providing ratings, visitors had the option to leave free-form comments. Below is a representative sample of feedback received:

“I went not really understanding the services provided. I am very grateful and pleased that this department exist and is currently assisting me to address conflicts in the workplace.”

“David was the first person I reached out to at UNLV actually listened to my concerns. He made me feel validated and respected.”

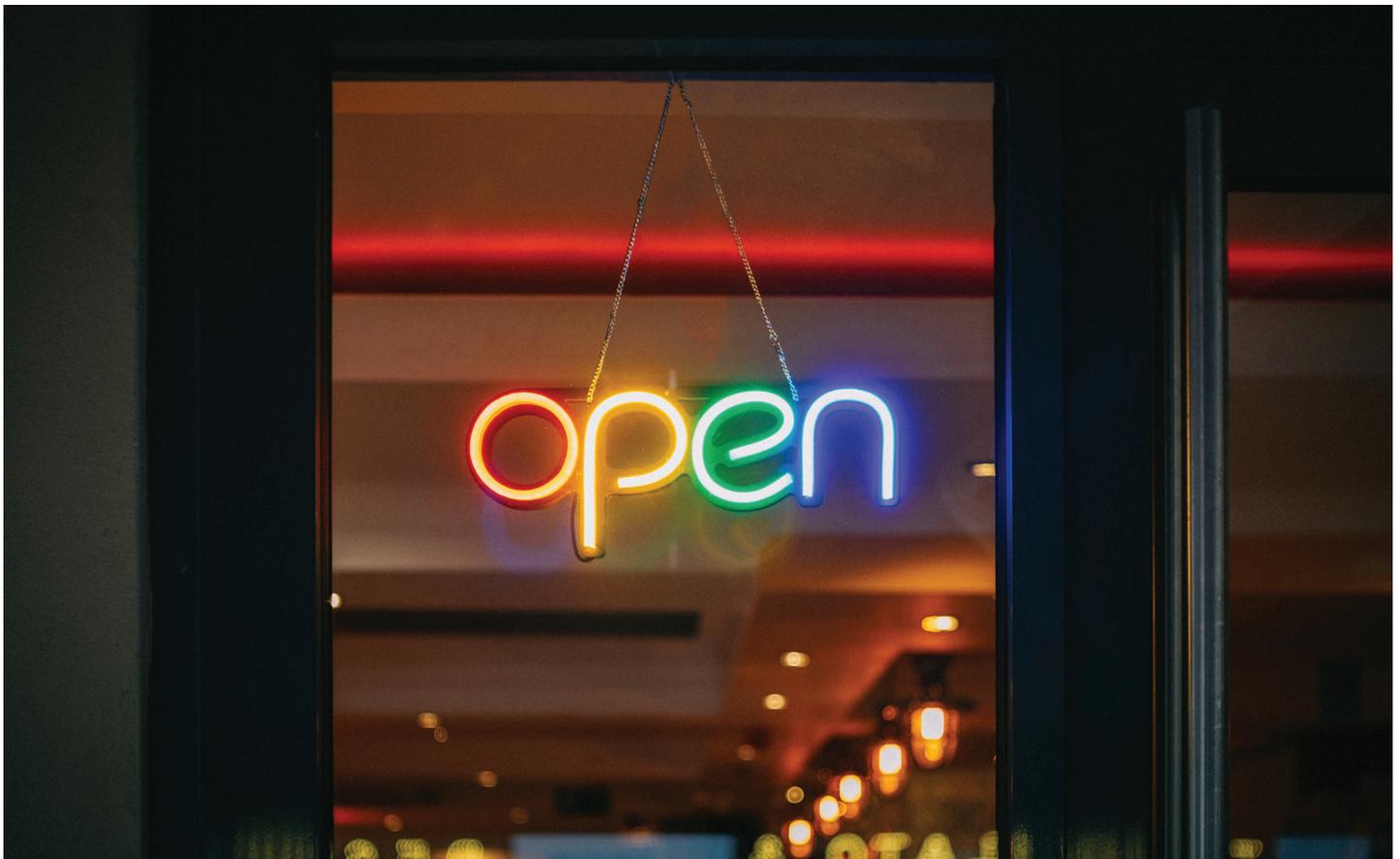
“It's a reassurance to have someone on campus who, in an official yet confidential and disinterested capacity, can examine a situation, share applicable policy, and help determine what, if any, next step should be taken.”

“I was very impressed with the sincere concern David showed in his communication with me. I felt that he was an empathetic listener and a problem solver. My level of anxiety dropped the more we discussed options and ideas. Great Job!”

“I was encouraged by Dave's neutral, supportive demeanor and the fact that he pointed out different perspectives to consider my situation from. Being listened to and heard helped a lot more than I thought it would.”

“I appreciate the opportunity to discuss concerns outside of my unit and also receive resources that I can use to resolve future conflicts. In addition to addressing my current concern, I find this to be a way to build my skillset in conflict resolution and know that there is someone I can reach out to if things don't work out again. Thank you for the help.”

“I appreciate the opportunity to discuss things in a safe space that is removed from my unit and provides helpful feedback to allow me to make better informed decisions.”



LOOKING AHEAD

Having created a strong foundation in 2021, the Ombuds Office is well situated to serve campus in an expanded role in 2022. Specifically, the Ombuds will prioritize the following areas:

Outreach

The Ombuds will continue to speak with units across campus, with the goal of having a face-to-face or remote meeting with every unit on campus. In addition, we want to contribute to events like New Faculty Orientation and employee onboarding, ensuring that as faculty and staff come to UNLV, they are aware of the office and the resources it provides.

We are looking forward to scheduling a range of events around Ombuds Day 2022, and plan to present another week of activities.

The Ombuds will also make regular use of “For the Ombuds,” a blog hosted on the Ombuds website, for communicating issues to campus and raising awareness of both Ombuds Office services and programs and conflict resolution strategies.

Access

With 219 contacts in seven months of operation in 2021, the Ombuds Office was accessible to a range of campus visitors in several modes. We will intensify our efforts to be accessible to campus in 2022, with a focus on expanding use of the office by classified staff, who did not use the office in proportion to their numbers in 2021. These efforts will include expanded outreach, including work with the Classified Staff Council, and raising awareness about flex hours for the office—meeting with the Ombuds remotely or in person outside of standard business hours—to promote accessibility with employees working alternative shifts.

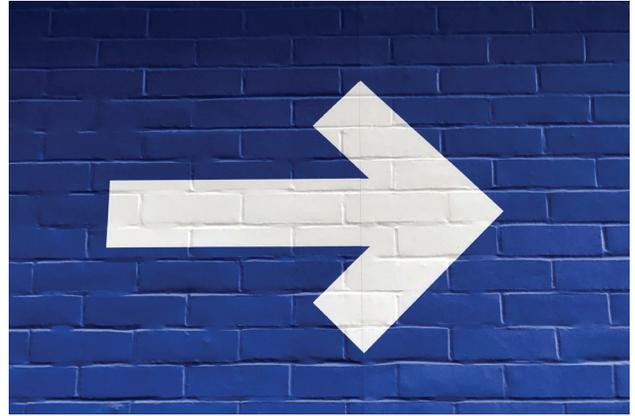
We will also work to provide more information on the Ombuds website, particularly about how to best access Ombuds services and request workshops and seminars.

Mediation

The Ombuds Office will continue to promote mediation as an informal dispute resolution alternative to campus, with the goal on increasing the number of mediations conducted. In addition, the Ombuds will continue to provide facilitation services for units whose discussion is not appropriate for mediation as it is typically structured, but would benefit from the guidance of impartial, external facilitators.

Programming

To help provide outreach and promote conflict resolution across campus, the Ombuds Office will sponsor a variety of programs, seminars, and workshops to the diverse constituencies of campus. At unit meetings, dedicated retreats, and special events, the Ombuds Office is committed to offering programming that increases understanding and enables better outcomes for everyone.



SUMMING UP

In short, the Ombuds Office had a productive 2021 and looks forward to an even more productive and engaging 2022. If you would like to speak with a member of the team about scheduling an individual appointment, workshop or seminar, discussing mediation as an alternative to an ongoing dispute, or to learn more about how the Ombuds Office can help, please reach out to us:

Phone: (702) 895-1823

Email: ombuds@unlv.edu

Web (for reporting form and calendar slots):

<https://www.unlv.edu/ombuds>



