

Annual Report of the Brown University Ombuds Office July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018

This is the sixth annual report of the Brown University Ombuds Office.

The Ombuds Office is an independent, neutral, and confidential resource for faculty, postdocs, all staff, graduate students and medical students to bring any Brown-related concern. The Office is an alternate and informal channel of communication. The Ombudsperson listens to people and offers information about Brown policies and procedures. She helps people who seek a confidential channel for discussing or addressing an issue of concern without fear of retribution. The Ombuds Office helps to promote ethical conduct and values; to alleviate disruption caused by disputes; and to identify policies, practices, or issues where a systems change may be appropriate. The Office provides a place for people to seek guidance on how to report actual or potential violations of Brown's legal obligations, and, if they wish it, to do so anonymously.

The Office follows the International Ombudsman Association's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

- The Ombudsperson, as a designated **neutral**, remains **unaligned** and **impartial**. The Ombudsperson strives to promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of the University's practices and processes and policies. The Ombudsperson does not engage in any situation that could create a conflict of interest. The Ombudsperson does not serve as anyone's lawyer, advocate or representative, nor do they provide protection of legal rights. Their purpose is to seek a fair process for expressing concerns and resolving disputes that may arise in the Brown community. Individuals seeking assistance are referred to as visitors rather than clients because the term client connotes an advisory role instead of the neutral role in which ombuds serve.
- The Ombudsperson will not answer questions about people with whom they may have spoken, or disclose an individual's name or specific issue, with anyone outside of the Ombuds Office, unless, during the course of their discussions with a visitor, they are given permission to do so for the purpose of informal resolution of the issue, and if the Ombuds also agrees to attempt informal resolution. The only exception to this pledge of **confidentiality** is where the Ombuds determines that there is an imminent risk of serious harm or if the Ombudsperson is compelled to do so. The Ombuds Office does not keep permanent records of confidential communications. Permanent records kept by the Office include only statistical information for analyzing and reporting trends and recommendations to the Institute. All other records are regularly destroyed.
- The Ombudsperson is **independent** in structure, function and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization. The Brown University Ombudsperson reports to the President in a manner that is independent of ordinary line and staff structures.
- The Ombudsperson works **informally**—she has no power to make, change, or set aside administrative decisions or Brown University policy. The Ombudsperson does not conduct formal investigations. The Ombuds Office is not a place to give notice to Brown of any claims; in instances where notification to Brown would be necessary to resolve a problem or preserve rights, people must use other channels. (The Brown Ombuds can

help to identify proper communication channels that do “receive notice” for Brown and that can conduct formal investigations.)

For more information please see the Ombuds Office website: <https://brown.edu/ombudsperson> and the International Ombudsman Association website: <https://www.ombudsassociation.org/standards-of-practice-code-of-ethics-2>

Educational Outreach and Community Involvement

The Ombudsperson provides workshops on subjects including: conflict management, bystander interventions, working with teams, de-escalation of conflicts, talking with abrasive people; facilitates retreats and meetings; and makes presentations about the services of the Ombuds Office. This year the Ombudsperson interacted with approximately 700 people in this manner (100 more than last year.) Examples include:

- Workshops for undergraduates on working in teams, and graduate students, faculty and staff on the concepts and skills needed to engage in conflict management/resolution effectively.
- The Dealing with Conflict workshop in 3 consecutive sections (16 hours, 12 hours, 12 hours for a total of 40 hours) The workshop was offered twice to the entire community over the fall semester and over two weeks in August. About 50 faculty, staff, graduate students and undergraduates participated.
- Workshops were offered through Learning Point, Staff Development Day, SAC, and the School of Public Health.
- Workshops on Managing Conflict for the Department of Public Safety
- The Ombudsperson facilitated conversations and retreats in several academic and administrative units.

Ombuds Office Data

The Ombuds Office operates as an informal resource and only collects non-identifying information from Visitors. In addition, the Ombuds Office records the number of people attending presentations and workshops.

Number of Visitors Data

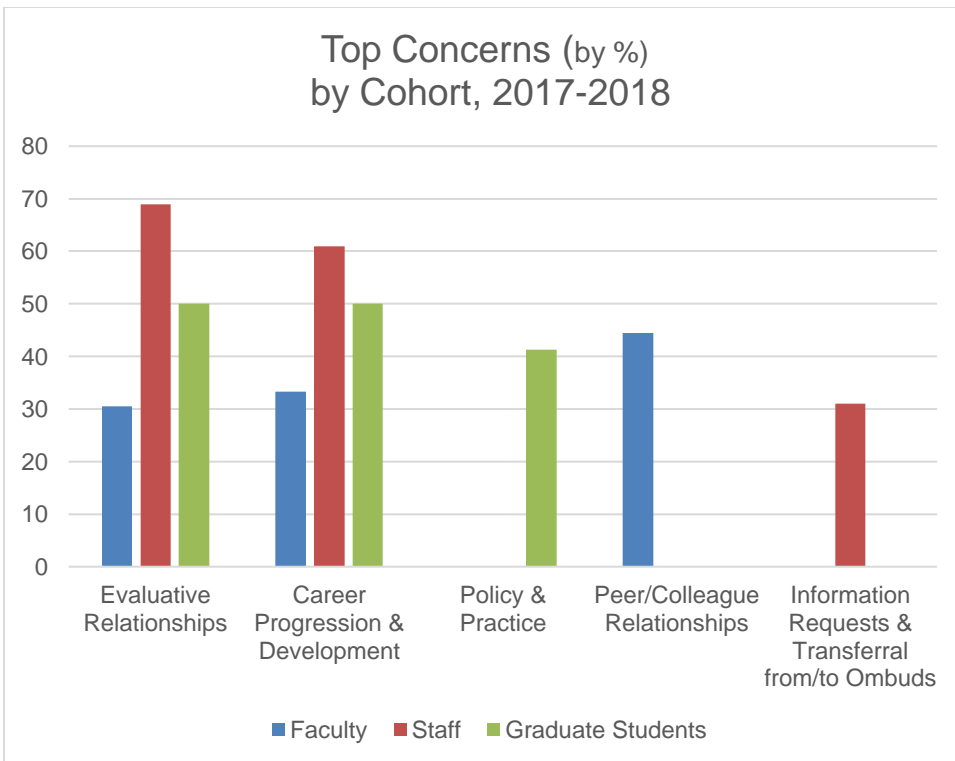
The number of visitors remained steady from last year at 185. About one quarter of visitors came more than once to the office.

Detail by Constituency	July 1, 2017 - June 31, 2018
Faculty	36
Postdocs (Fellows & Research Assoc.)	2
Staff (exempt, non-exempt, union)	87
Graduate Students (PhD MA MD)	46
Undergraduate Students	4
Other (alumni, parents etc.)	10
Total	185



Primary Concerns Data

Visitors meet with the Ombudsperson about any Brown related concern. The Ombuds Office uses a list of Primary Concerns and these represent large categories of issues that could be brought to the attention of the Ombudsperson by the visitor. Detailed descriptions of the Primary Concerns are listed in Appendix A.



The Ombudsperson raises issues brought by visitors to the appropriate administrators and leaders throughout the year, and reports overall trend data at the end of each year. In this way the Ombudsperson can act to make sure issues are addressed early and dealt with in the least escalated way, unless it is necessary to escalate an issue. In addition, trend data can underline the importance of issues that the administration has already noticed, or bring issues to the attention of the administration. In all situations the Ombudsperson takes great care to ensure visitors confidentiality is ensured. There are different ways to raise issues depending on what permission is given by a visitor. These run along a spectrum of asking questions and providing trend information in a non-identifying manner to raising specific concerns. While confidentiality may limit the Ombudsperson’s ability to provide detail, there are still ways to raise issues and themes, especially when they cross divisions and/or apply to the entire University. Visitors to the Ombuds often raise issues that are important to the efficiency, effectiveness, equity and fairness for not only themselves, but for that part of the organization, and indeed to the University as a whole.

I would like to thank the Brown University community for their trust in the Ombuds Office, sharing important issues and your work to address those issues, and manage and resolve conflicts. It is a privilege to work with all of you.

Respectfully, Ruthy Kohorn Rosenberg
Brown University Ombudsperson

Appendix A: Brown University Concerns Categories;
Appendix B: Comparative Trend Charts

Appendix A: Brown University Ombuds Office -- Concerns Categories

Employee Compensation & Benefit. Concerns, issues or inquiries re: equity, appropriateness or competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs. **ECB**

Evaluative Relationships. Concerns. Concerns, issues or inquiries re: people in evaluative relationships (e.g., supervisor-employee, faculty-student.) May include differences in cultures, priorities, values, or beliefs; problems w/supervisory effectiveness, interpersonal relationships, communication or cooperation; mistrust, incivility, lack of cooperation, misunderstandings, etc. **ER**

Peer/Colleague Relationships. Concerns, issues or inquiries re peers/colleagues not in evaluative relationship (e.g., conflict between among staff, researchers in lab, or members of student organization.) May include differences in cultures, priorities, values, or beliefs; problems w/interpersonal relationships, communication, or cooperation; mistrust; incivility; misunderstandings, etc. **PCR**

Career Progression and Development. Concerns, issues or inquiries re: processes or decisions re: entering or leaving a job or job duties. May include job progression, stability, future potential, professional development, restructuring or changing organizational relationships, nature and place of assignment, termination, etc. This category includes graduate students, post-docs, etc. **CPD**

Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance. Concerns, issues or inquiries perceived to be a risk (financial, sanction, legal, reputation etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed. May include allegations of waste, fraud or abuse, including business judgment, illegal activity, slander or defamation of character. **LRFC**

Safety, Health, and Physical Environment Concerns. Concerns, issues or inquiries re safety and health. May include fear of someone/something w/i the environment, potential for violence, etc. **SHPE**

Services/Administrative. Concerns, issues or inquiries re services or offices. May include quality of service, responsiveness, application of rules, behavior of service providers, etc. **SA**

Policy/Practice. Concerns, issues or inquiries re efficacy or equity of University policy or practice. May include perceived need for revision, failure to follow or to adhere to published document, etc. **PP**

Integrity: academic work, scholarship or intellectual property. Concerns, issues or inquiries re academic honesty, plagiarism, research integrity, ownership or authorship of intellectual property, etc. **INTEG**

Harassment or discrimination. Concerns, issues, or inquiries re: harassment, disparate treatment, or illegal discrimination based on protected class. **HD**

Hostile Environment/Incivility. Concerns, issues, or inquiries regarding harassment, hostile environment, or incivility, not based on protected class. **HEI**

Information Requests and Transferal. (i) Requests for information/assistance in accessing or understanding information, resources, policies, procedures, etc.; (ii) Communication of information, perceptions, experiences from visitor for edification of the Ombuds. **INFO**

Work or Educational Environment Concerns. Concerns, issues, or inquiries re: tone of workplace or educational environment, including leadership style, peer relationships, departmental dysfunction, or physical working environment. **WEE**

Other. Concerns issues, inquiries or requests for options about how to proceed with issues that do not fall within the above categories. **O**

Appendix B: Comparative Trend Data

Concerns	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Employee Compensation & Benefits	18	12	16	5	3
Evaluative Relationships	76	98	89	65	96
Peer/Colleague Relationships	19	40	30	12	36
Career Progression & Development	62	80	78	50	90
Legal, Regulatory, Financial & Compliance	5	6	4	8	6
Safety, Health & Physical Environment	9	7	5	7	16
Services/Administrative	2	38	22	31	2
Policy/Practice	20	37	58	65	46
Integrity: academic, scholarship, IP	5	8	5	3	8
Harassment or discrimination (protected class)	3	20	21	14	37
Hostile Environment/Incivility (not protected)	16	23	22	7	15
Information requests & information transferal	5	42	73	3	48
Work or Educational Environment Concerns	31	61	69	43	24
Other	13	7	5	8	1

Constituency	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Faculty	56	47	45	45	36	36
Postdoc	5	3	2	3	8	2
Graduate, Medical, Professional Students	6	37	42	35	31	46
Undergraduates	0	5	2	12	7	4
Staff	19	98	120	119	82	87
Other	0	2	3	11	6	10
TOTALS	86	192	214	225	170	185