



2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Ombuds Office for Students and Postdoctoral Appointees is to provide an informal dispute resolution process in which the Ombudsperson advocates for fairness, justice, respect for differences, and reasonable solutions to student and postdoctoral issues and concerns. As such, the Ombuds Office tracks trends, behaviors and practices that serve as alert mechanisms for systemic and sustainable change at UC Berkeley.

The Ombuds Office for Students and Postdoctoral Appointees was established because this institution cares about and upholds its commitment to fair policies and procedures, and recognizes the value of providing an informal dispute resolution resource for the Cal community. Those who use this office are empowered to decide for themselves how they will address their concerns and are coached in conflict resolution techniques and the language of non-defensive communication. Students are given invaluable resources and information to support them in their process of exploring optimal ways of moving through challenging situations to a viable solution. The Ombuds office works toward mutual resolutions that reflect the highest vision for students, staff and faculty alike. Our participation is solely geared toward providing fair and impartial outcomes that reflect student success, minimal use of administrative resources, reducing campus liability and exposure, and ultimately, creating and maintaining an environment that furthers the campus' goal of equity, civility and inclusion.

MEDIATION

Mediation is an important part of the work of the Ombuds Office. Managing contentious situations can be very challenging, and having a third party mediate these potentially difficult conversations fosters a more objective environment where creative, sustainable resolution can occur. Mediation allows for all parties to be heard and seen, which is often what people in conflict are searching for.

OUTREACH

While the daily assistance provided to students, postdocs, and others to respond to difficult situations effectively is essential, the Ombuds Office must also proactively maintain good relationships with campus administration, faculty, and staff and ensure broad campus understanding of the purpose and role of the Student Ombuds Office.

Unfortunately, due to staff transitions, our outreach efforts were minimal for the past academic year. As we envision the coming year, outreach is an area of high priority for the Ombuds Office, and we are planning a more focused approach to increase our reach and visibility on campus.

TRAINING

The Cal community is a dynamic environment with diverse populations that all bring their own styles and ways of being in the world. Those ways and behaviors can conflict with one another. Part of the work of the Ombudsperson is facilitating trainings that teach conflict resolution techniques, and how to have difficult conversations that are more productive and less argumentative. These trainings expand the capacity of intact



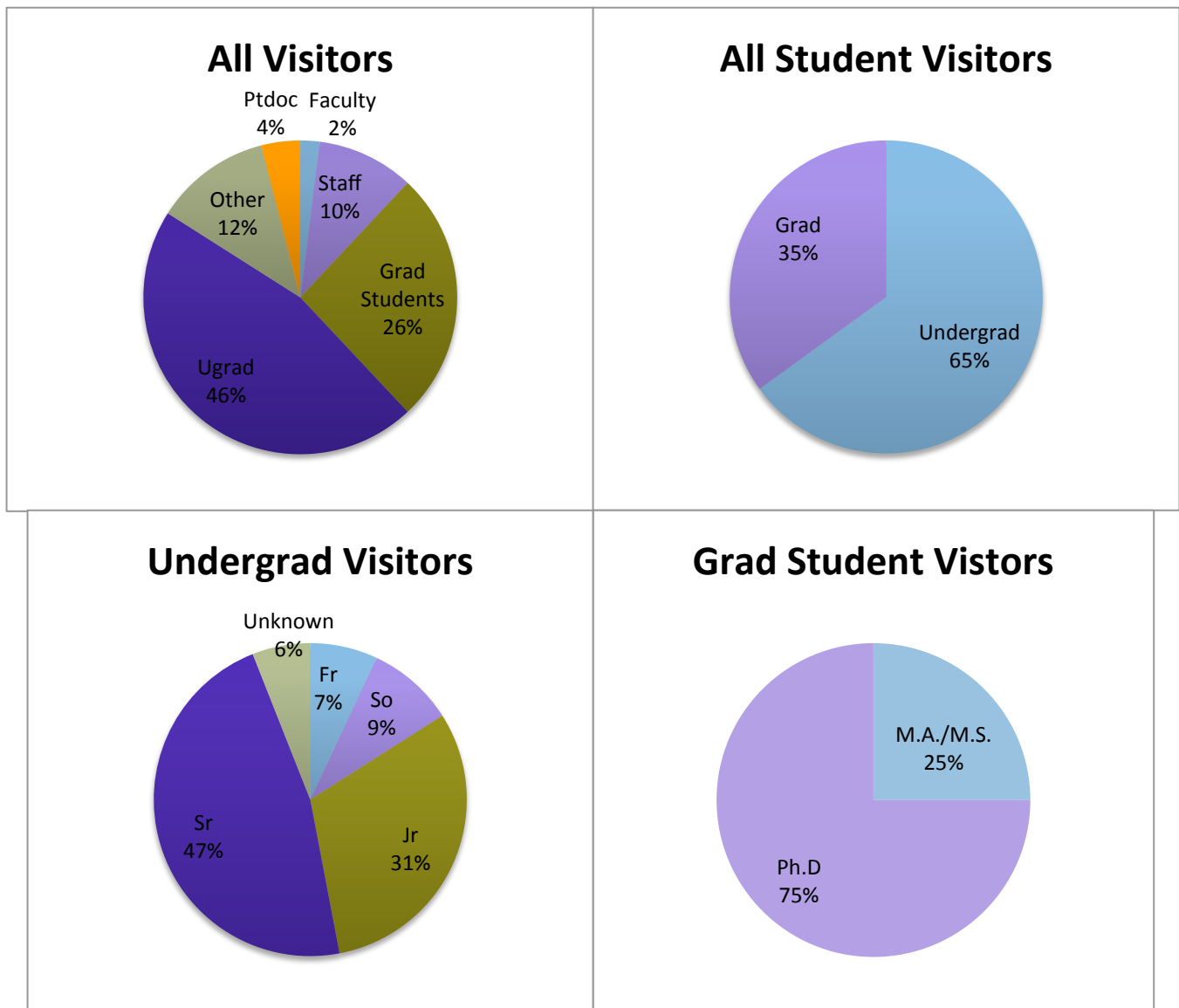
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groups and inform campus populations on how to communicate with a greater degree of respect, integrity and compassion. This year, the Ombudsperson participated in various panels and trainings, including ASUC Officers Training, Residential Life Staff Training, and Minority Graduate Student Orientation.

VISITORS TO THE STUDENT OMBUDS OFFICE

All of the information in this report is based on the number of new cases or issues brought to the Student Ombuds Office in 2011-2012. While some of those issues involved just one phone consultation or visit to the office, many required additional appointments, meetings with other parties, and/or phone calls, and some cases continued for several months.

Between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2012, 97 individuals contacted the Student Ombuds Office for assistance with new issues. While the majority of the visitors were undergraduate and graduate students, we also assisted postdoctoral appointees, as well as faculty and staff that had student-related concerns, and other community members such as recent graduates, alumni, and parents.



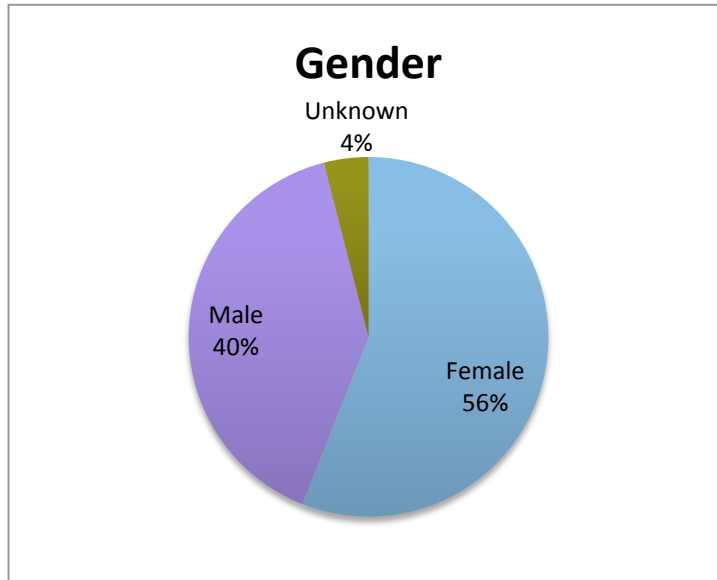


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DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (7/2011 – 6/2012)

When students and postdocs come in for an appointment, we ask them if they would be willing to provide demographic information. Participation is voluntary and the information is kept anonymous. The information below is based on new visitors only.

56% of the visitors to the Student Ombuds Office were women and 40% were men. Campus-wide, the split is 54% women and 46% men. Undergraduate students made up 65% of the student visitors and graduate students made up 35% although undergrads are 72% of the total UC Berkeley student population and grads are 28%.



Self-Reported Race Information

2011-2012	UG	Grad	2010-2011	UG	Grad
Af/AfAm	7%		Af/AfAm	3%	
As/AsAm	27%	21%	As/AsAm	4%	16%
Hist/Chic/Lat	7%		Hist/Chic/Lat	13%	11%
White	11%	25%	White	19%	32%
Mixed Race	4%	4%	Mixed Race	9%	5%
Other			Other	3%	2%
Not Given	44%	50%	Not Given	49%	34%

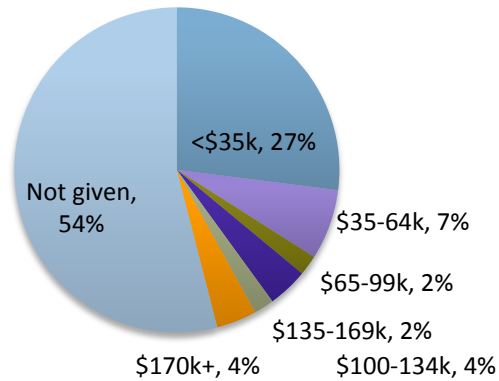


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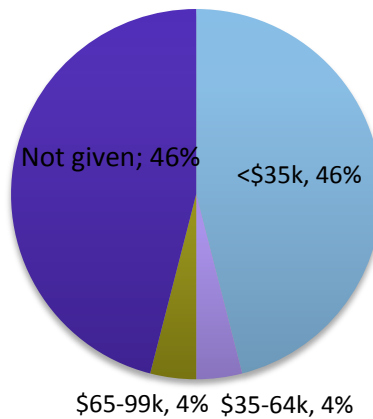
Self-Reported Financial Information

13% of undergrad visitors and 58% of graduate student visitors consider themselves to be financially independent from parents/guardians.

Undergrad Income Level

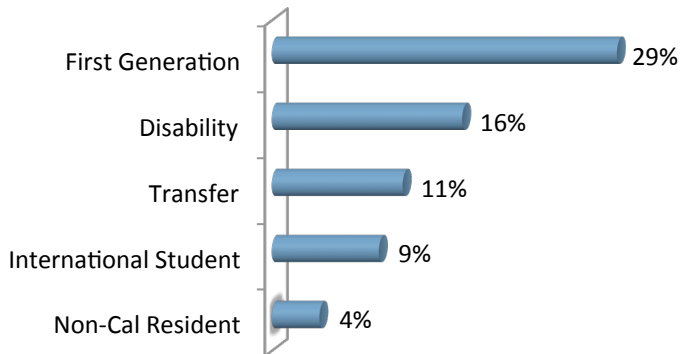


Grad Income Level

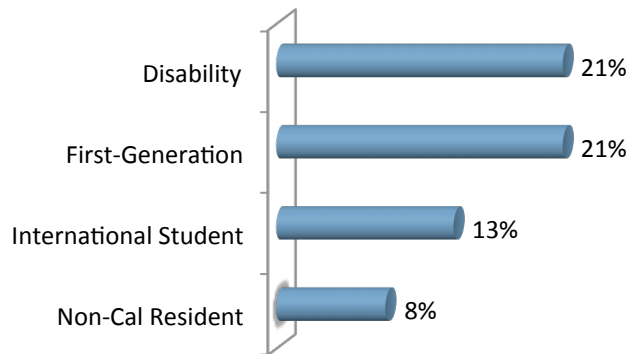




Undergrad Student Demographics



Grad Student Demographics



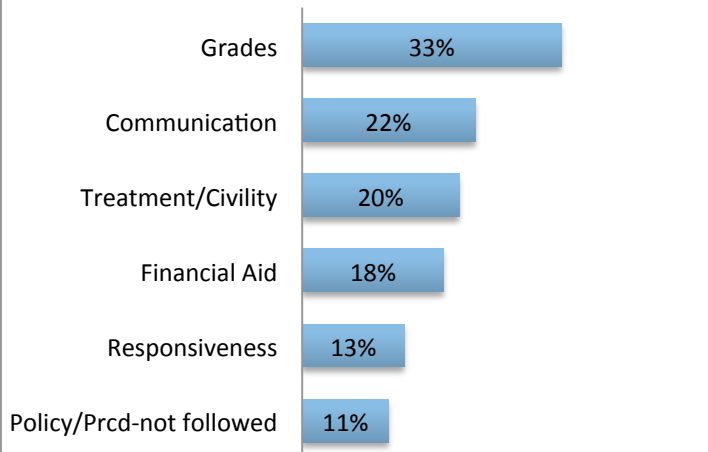
ISSUES BROUGHT TO THE STUDENT OMBUDS OFFICE (7/2011 – 6/2012)

We currently track a wide range of issues, including the following:

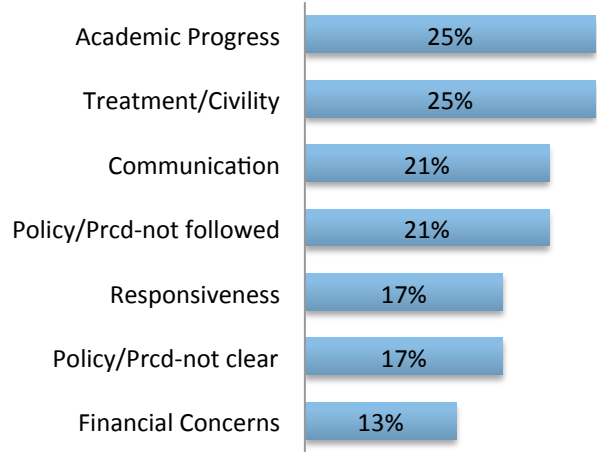
Academic Dishonesty, Academic Probation, Academic Progress, Admission, Assault/Harassment, Career Path, Communication, Compensation/Bft, Compensation/Fellowship, Consultation, Dept/Org Climate, Disability, Discrimination, Dismissal, Diversity-Related, Enrollment, Facilities, Financial Aid, Financial Concerns, Grades, Health/Safety, Housing, Policy/Pracd-not clear, Policy/Pracd-not followed, Quality of Service, Rape/Assault, Readmission, Registration, Religious Accommodation, Residency, Responsiveness/Timeliness, Sexual Harassment, Student Conduct, Treatment by Advisor/Dissertation Committee, and Treatment/Civility.

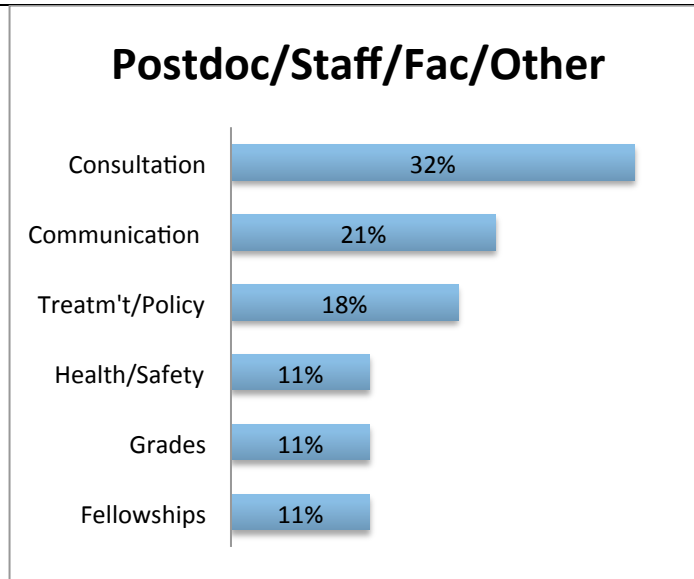
The most common issues or conflicts vary by group:

Undergrad Student Issues



Graduate Student Issues





Most Common Issues compared to our previous reports.

Undergraduate Most Common Issues	7/1/11-6/30/12	7/1/10-6/30/11	7/1/09-6/30/10
Grades	33%	38%	33%
Communication	22%	13%	
Treatm't/Civility	20%	14%	16%
Financial Aid	18%	7%	
Policy/Pracd-not clear	9%	12%	17%
Admission	9%	6%	
Disability	9%	1%	
Enrollment		7%	11%

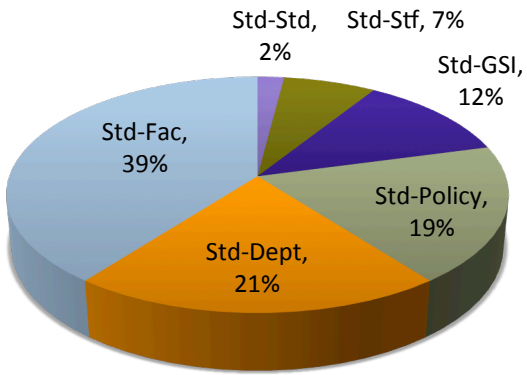
Grad Student Most Common Issues	7/1/11-6/30/12	7/1/10-6/30/11	7/1/09-6/30/10
Academic Progress	25%	7%	16%
Treatment-Adv/Dis	25%	16%	21%
Treatm't/Civility	25%	7%	16%
Communication	21%	16%	13%
Policy/Pracd-not clear	17%	14%	34%
Grades	8%	9%	13%
Dept/Org Climate	4%	9%	
Sexual Harassment	4%	5%	
Quality of Service	4%	5%	



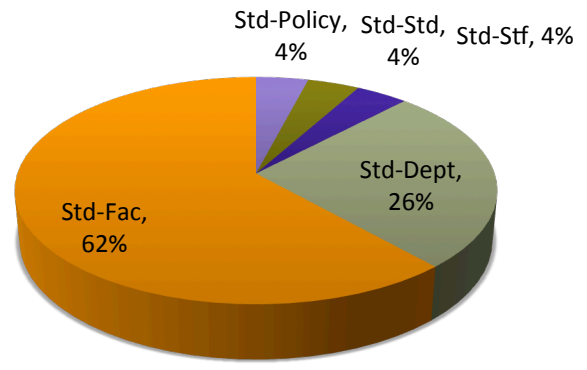
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The parties involved in the issue/conflict vary by visitor type.

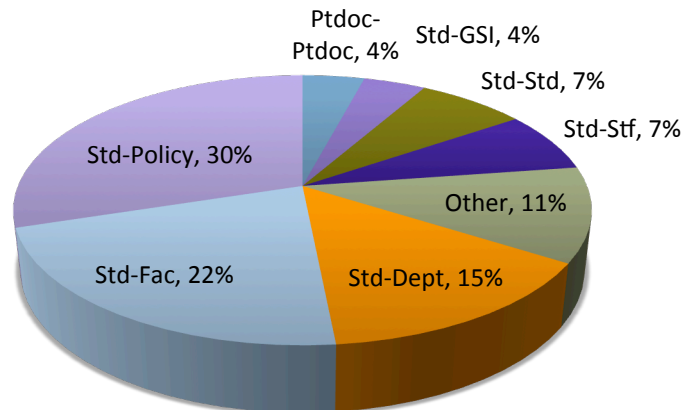
Undergrad Issues Involve



Grad Issues Involve



Ptdoc/Fac/Staff/Other Issues Involve



TRENDS AND ISSUES

Treatment and Civility: We saw a large increase in the percentage of undergraduates and graduates who experienced Treatment and Civility as a concern in the 2011-2012 academic year. It was an area of concern for 20% of undergraduates (14% in 2010-2011) and 25% for graduate students (7% in 2010-2011). Twenty-five percent of graduate students specifically reported Treatment and Civility by their Advisor or Dissertation committee as an area of concern (an increase from 16% in 2010-2011). For faculty, staff, postdocs, and others, this area continues to be one of the top categories of concern brought forth to our office. The issues included treatment that was perceived as rude or disrespectful, lack of responsiveness to emails or meeting requests, an environment in the department or lab that the student felt was discouraging or hostile, as well as a perceived lack of support, both academically and personally.

Communication: Twenty-two percent of the undergraduate visitors (increase from 13% in 2010-2011), 21% of the grad students (increase from 16%), and 21% of the others who contacted the Student Ombuds Office expressed concerns



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about how we communicate with one another. In many of these cases what was said was less important than how it was said. Clearly explaining guidelines and expectations up front and doing so in a way that is direct and supported by policies makes it less likely that communications about performance, grades, or denied petitions will be perceived as somewhat arbitrary and personal in nature.

Unclear Policies and Procedures: As a more specific form of the issue of Communication, 9% of undergraduates and 17% of graduate students reported Unclear Policies and Procedures as an issue. There was a slight decrease in percentage of reportings from undergraduates (by 3%) and a slight increase by graduate students (by 3%). The numbers show that this area continues to be a top area of concern experienced by students.

Overall, it is very helpful to have clear, detailed information about policies and procedures on websites and in handbooks and fliers. It is equally important that we personally relay this information in a way that is professional, respectful and concise. Advisors, faculty and staff should know where to find information and identify resources, and to whom students should be referred if they have questions or find themselves in a unique situation. In an effort to assist, advisors can inadvertently provide incomplete or inaccurate information on topics about which they have limited knowledge. It is much wiser to promise to look for the information or refer to someone who is well versed on the topic. As layoffs and other cuts affect the availability of faculty and staff and we are all asked to take on new areas of responsibility, it is crucial that appropriate training be provided and that we be clear about what we know and don't know so that we can get correct information to the students and avoid misinformation that can lead to mistrust, academic difficulties, perceptions of mistreatment, and time consuming and costly grievances.

Grades and Academic Progress: Concerns related to grades continue to be the top issue brought to our office by undergraduates (33%) with academic progress also being one of top three issues for graduate students (25%). Eleven percent of faculty/staff and postdocs also consulted our office regarding grades related to the students they work with. In many cases, conflict could be avoided by a thorough discussion in the course syllabi or academic program handbook of the factors that would be used to evaluate progress and determine grades and any non-academic factors like absences and class participation that could be part of that determination. In the absence of clear guidelines and grading rubrics, students can feel that more personal factors are taken into account when academic performance is evaluated.

Financial Aid: We saw an increase in the area of financial aid concerns (18% from 7% in the previous year) for undergraduate students. Thirteen percent of graduate students reported financial concerns as an area of concern. With the rising cost of tuition and fees, students are experiencing more difficulties and stressors related to financing their education. The Ombudsperson worked closely with the Office of Financial Aid to clarify policies and procedures for students, assist with communication between parties to remove specific barriers related to individual cases, and to develop various options related to unique situations and circumstances.