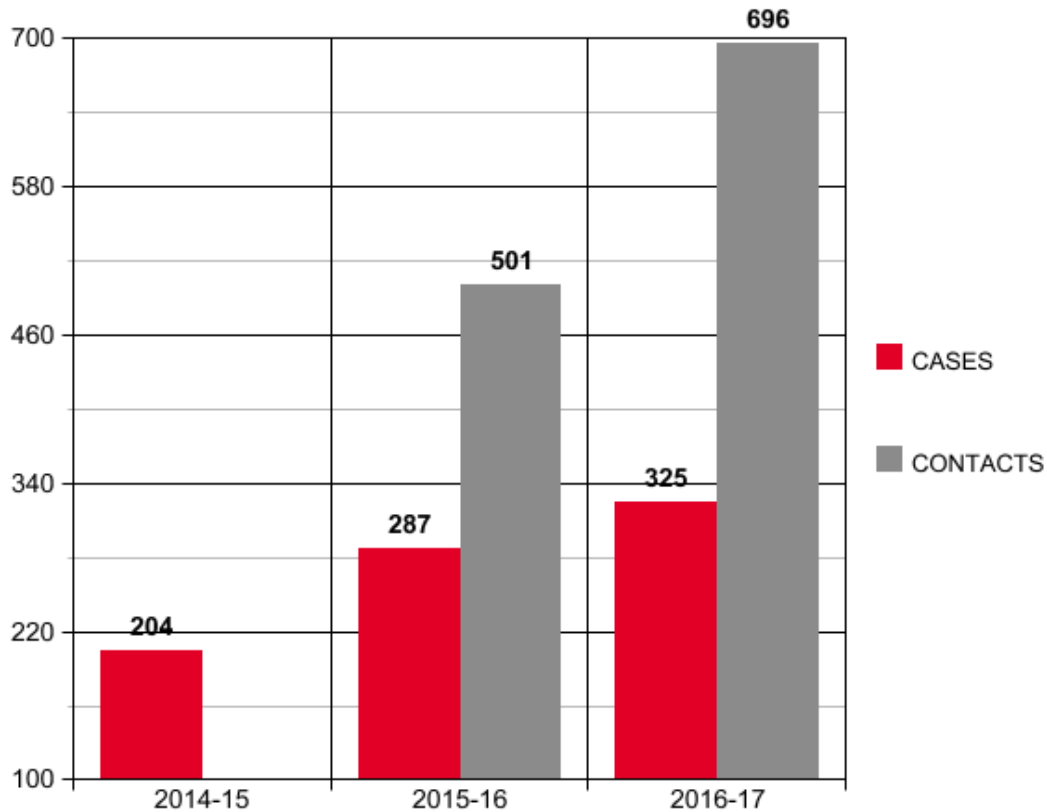


Student Ombuds Services 2016-17 Annual Report

Submitted by Mike Giancola
Assistant Vice Provost/Student Ombudsperson

- Student Ombuds Services provides confidential, impartial and informal assistance for students to address issues of concern, and support to address conflict management, prevention and resolution. The Ombuds advocates for fair processes and empowers students to successfully navigate NC State.
- Student Ombuds Services provides consultation to faculty, staff, administration and parents on a variety of student life issues in support of their roles to promote student success.
- As the Student Ombuds, one of my roles is to provide feedback to administration and campus departments/units in order to promote fair processes and enable student success and support the University Strategic goal of pursuing organizational excellence. I have shared recommendations regarding the excused absence regulation, vaccination requirement, and valedictorian recognition, just to name a few. Additionally, I have surfaced concerns to various administrators and departments for their attention and resolution.
- 325 cases were handled by the Student Ombudsperson during the 2016-17 academic year resulting in 696 total contacts. This represents a 13% increase in cases and a 39% increase in total contacts over 2015-16.
- An increased focus was placed on outreach to the campus community this year. Student Ombuds Services provided outreach to the following units during the academic year: Academic Advisor's list serve, Academic Support Program for Student Athletes, Athletics (multiple presentations to Athletics' coaching supervisors, Coaches meeting and Student Athlete Advisory Council), Campus Police, CSLEPS, Counseling Center, Department of Community Standards, Department of Social Work, Disability Services Office, Exploratory Studies, Fraternity & Sorority Life, Graduate School, Graduate Student Association, H & SS (DGPs, DUPs and Directors of Advising), Inter-Residence Council, OIED, Office of International Services, Student Government/Student Senate, Student Health Services, Student Involvement, Student Legal Services, Student Media, TRIO, and University Housing. This will continue to be a focus area to ensure the campus community knows of the services offered by SOS and to expand the conversation about how we can all work together to support student success at NC State.
- In collaboration with the Graduate School, a video was produced to explain ombuds services to graduate students that will be showed during Graduate Student Orientation and linked on our websites.
- Skill development workshops and classes were provided for COM 466, Impact Leadership Village, Leadership Development Series, STS 323 and STS 323Q (multiple sections), and Student Media.

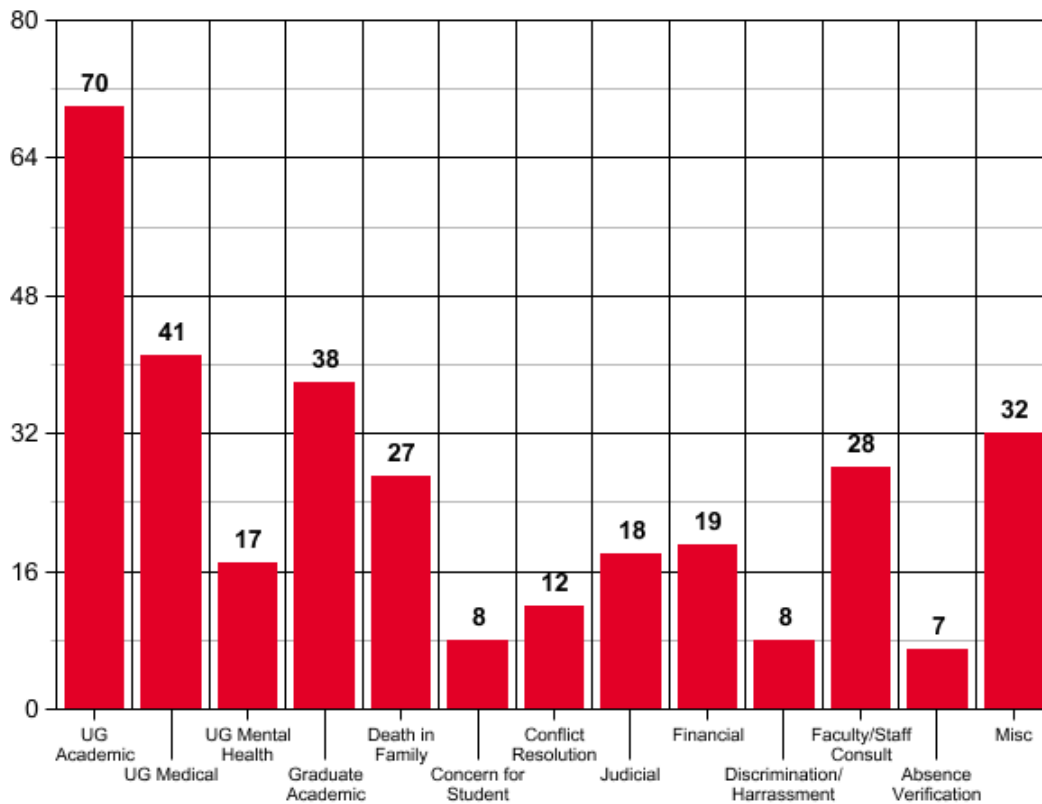
Student Ombuds Services Cases (since inception)



- 13% increase in cases over 2015-16.
- 39% increase in number of contacts over 2015-16.

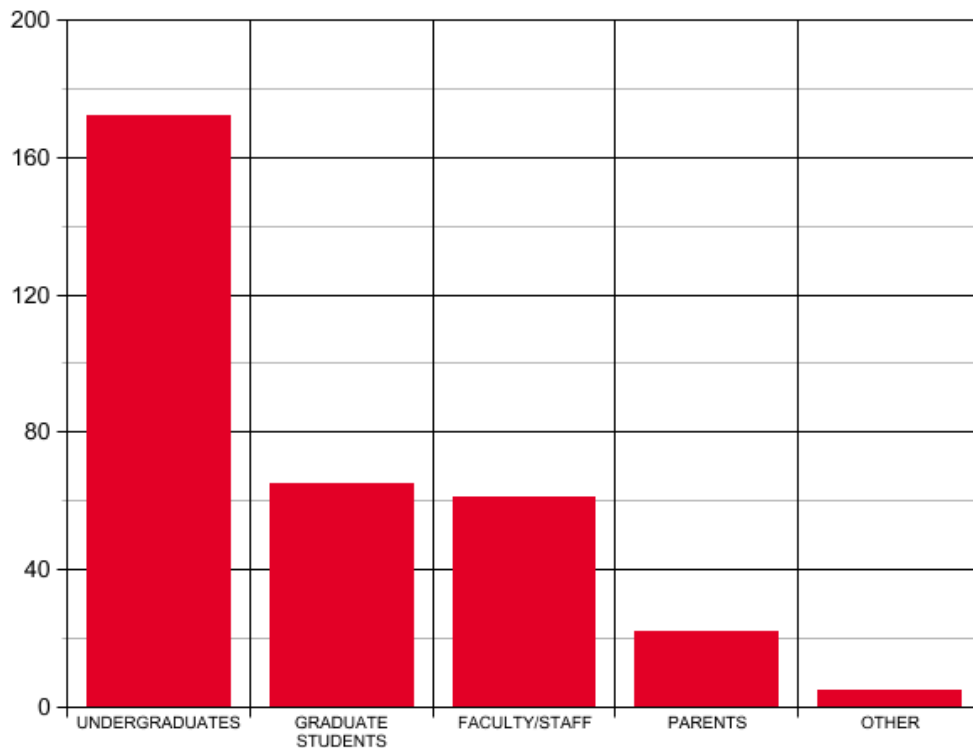
Note: Each visitor to the office constitutes a unique case (If there are multiple students involved in the same situation, collectively they are recorded as one case). A contact refers to each interaction with a visitor and any contacts made on their behalf to a campus entity.

Types of Cases



- General Academic Concerns include grade disputes, concerns regarding treatment by professors and related academic policies.
- UG Academic (medical) often involved requests for assistance after some traumatic medical incident (car accident, difficult diagnosis, etc.)
- UG Academic (mental health) often involved requests for assistance during or after psychological distress (stress, hospitalization, etc.)
- Most judicial cases involved students wanting to better understand their rights within the student judicial process and possible consequences should they be found responsible for a violation of the code of conduct. There was an increase in academic integrity cases this year (both undergraduate and graduate cases).
- Of the 8 cases that alleged discrimination and/or harassment, 2 were peer harassment in class, 4 were racist comments/messages, 1 was concerned about unequal pay for women, and 1 was based on disability discrimination.
- Most absence verification cases were handled by the DASA central office. Cases handled by SOS typically involved more complicated cases that required additional follow-up or support.

Visitor Status



- 42% of graduate cases were due to relationship/communication issues with advisor.
- Most contacts from faculty/staff were to consult on a student related issue.

Selected Cases & Recommendations

- Several cases of students alleging their PIs have submitted their work for publication without consent/proper attribution and assisted with a couple of cases with intellectual property disputes.
- Provided support to students after Hurricane Matthew (mostly cases where students couldn't get to class/document military service in National Guard) and those impacted by the national gas shortages in the fall.
- Provided support to student who had concern with the language regarding the vaccination requirement. Worked with Student Health Services to clarify the language to reduce future concerns.
- Surfaced concerns about messages /climate for female graduate students. Specific to one department and Graduate School agreed to follow-up during routine review of that program.

- Surfaced concern with the number of hours undergraduate students were being asked to work in a particular lab and payroll practices in conflict with university policies.
- Surfaced concerns from 2 students regarding the impact of the valedictorian recognition regulation on students who were dual enrolled in high school. EMAS has agreed the policy is out of date and written in a time when students weren't dual enrolled in high school.
- Assisted graduate student who was owed a tuition waiver from previous semester. Department was unresponsive until my inquiry. Resurfaced the concern of students being added to payroll after the deadline by the department and thus not being captured in the GSSP report.
- Provided support to students/faculty post-election and helped Counseling Center with staffing of discussion zones after the election.
- Assisted several students with concerns about their immigration status leading up to and after the presidential election.
- Assisted student who was negatively impacted by the elimination of the Emergency Medicine program.
- Surfaced the issue to EMAS about ½ semester classes that have census dates at the beginning of the semester instead of 2 weeks after the class starts (implications on drop/refund dates)
- Provided observations and recommendations regarding the excused absence policy, especially in cases where students are requesting absence for religious observation.
- Shared concern to graduate school about the need for independent study contracts between students and professor.
- Large number of cases with students dealing with grief associated with deaths in their families and provided support after a car accident on Greek Court that resulted in the death of an alum by a current student.
- Surfaced concerns from students, parents, and faculty staff about the on-line directory being out of date in many cases (especially the departmental directories).
- Assisted a graduate student with DSO accommodations for qualifying exam and raised whether a 12 hour exam period with a 1 hour break was an appropriate accommodation. Student was ultimately able to retake the exam (largely because the department was shifting to a research based exam). The student passed the retake.

Assessment:

- Based on a survey of visitors to Student Ombuds Services:
 - 96% said the Ombuds was courteous and helpful
 - 98% said the Ombuds helped identify and evaluate options to address their concerns
 - 98% reported the Ombuds was knowledgeable of institutional policies and procedures.
 - 98% trust the Ombuds to maintain confidentiality
 - 94% would refer others to Student Ombuds Services

- Selected comments from the survey included:
 - “My experience was excellent, if it wasn’t for the service, my conflict would have never been resolved.”
 - “The Ombuds helped my son and I navigate through NCSU procedures during a difficult time. He was very supportive and helped my son to minimize the damage to his academic standing from a temporary situation.”
 - “... staff were a great asset to me as I worked to assist students who were dealing with trauma.”
 - “This is a valuable service. It is here because your university genuinely wants you to succeed...”
 - “Should be made clear to new students that the office exists and the help it offers.”

Recommendations for the Future:

- Discussions are on-going regarding the benefits of a consolidated University Ombuds Services. The staff ombuds program was added as a pilot in Spring 2017. With this addition, the university now provides services to students, faculty and staff. Increased collaboration and communication among the ombuds will help enhance the services we can provide to the campus community.