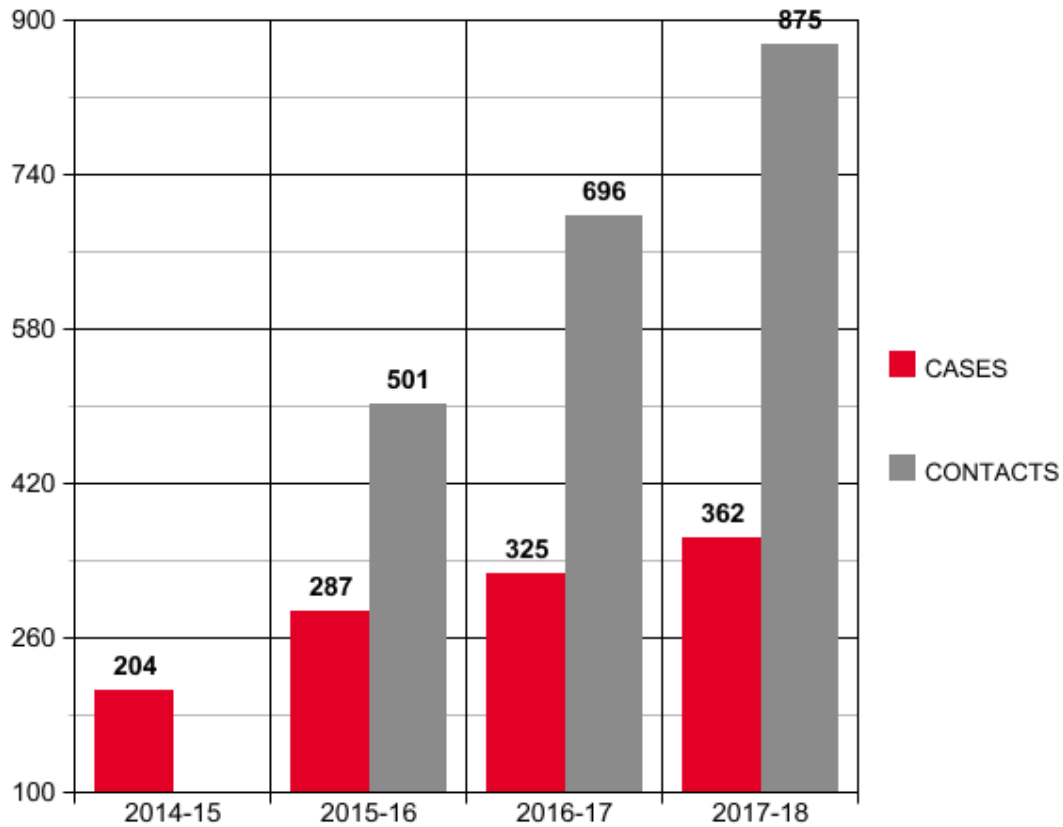


Student Ombuds Services 2017-18 Annual Report

Submitted by Mike Giancola
Assistant Vice Provost/Student Ombudsperson

- Student Ombuds Services provides confidential, impartial and informal assistance to address issues of concern, and support to address conflict management, prevention and resolution. The Ombuds advocates for fair processes and empowers students to navigate their NC State experience.
- Student Ombuds Services provides confidential consultations 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. Throughout the year, I have shared recommendations regarding the excused absence regulation, process for how faculty inform students about academic integrity concerns, and suggested more clarity for graduate students on fellowships regarding their status with the university, just to name a few. Additionally, I have surfaced concerns to various administrators and departments for their attention and resolution.
- 362 cases were handled by the Student Ombudsperson during the 2017-18 academic year resulting in 875 total contacts. This represents an 11% increase in cases and a 26% increase in total contacts.
- Student Ombuds Services has been serving as a point of contact for students experiencing food and/or housing insecurity and overall financial instability, and helped connect them with necessary resources on and off campus.
- A Student Emergency Fund was created by DASA with support from alumni and friends of NC State to provide flexible assistance to students facing an immediate, personal financial hardship that may jeopardize their ability to successfully continue their studies. The fund was operational during the latter part of the spring 2018 semester and the Student Ombuds reviewed 9 applications in consultation with Financial Aid. 8 students received funding totaling \$4195.
- Developed a partnership with the Associate Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine to establish office hours on the Biomedical Campus and establish contact with student leaders to let them know of the services provided by the Student Ombuds.
- Increased outreach to the campus community as well as increasing the number of skill development workshops and class presentations were goals for this year. Workshops were provided for COM 466, Leadership Development Program, STS 323 and STS 323Q (multiple sections), conflict resolution workshop for post docs and graduate students, Social Work Faculty, Library Staff, Stewards, Academic Advisors Roundtable, Goodnight Scholars, as well as facilitating several retreats for the Counseling Center staff. Outreach included International Graduate Student Orientation, Graduate Student Orientation Fair, WISE and Eco Villages, Multicultural Student Affairs, Office of Student Conduct, Student Senate, Trio Support Services, CVM Student Leaders, Biology Graduate Association, OIED, ASPSA, Campus Police, DRO, Student Media, Exploratory Studies, AACC, Student Health Services, Student Legal Services, University Housing, Women's Center, GLBT Center, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Student Involvement, CSLEPS, Veteran's Resource Center, Student Centers, Graduate School, and the Vet School.

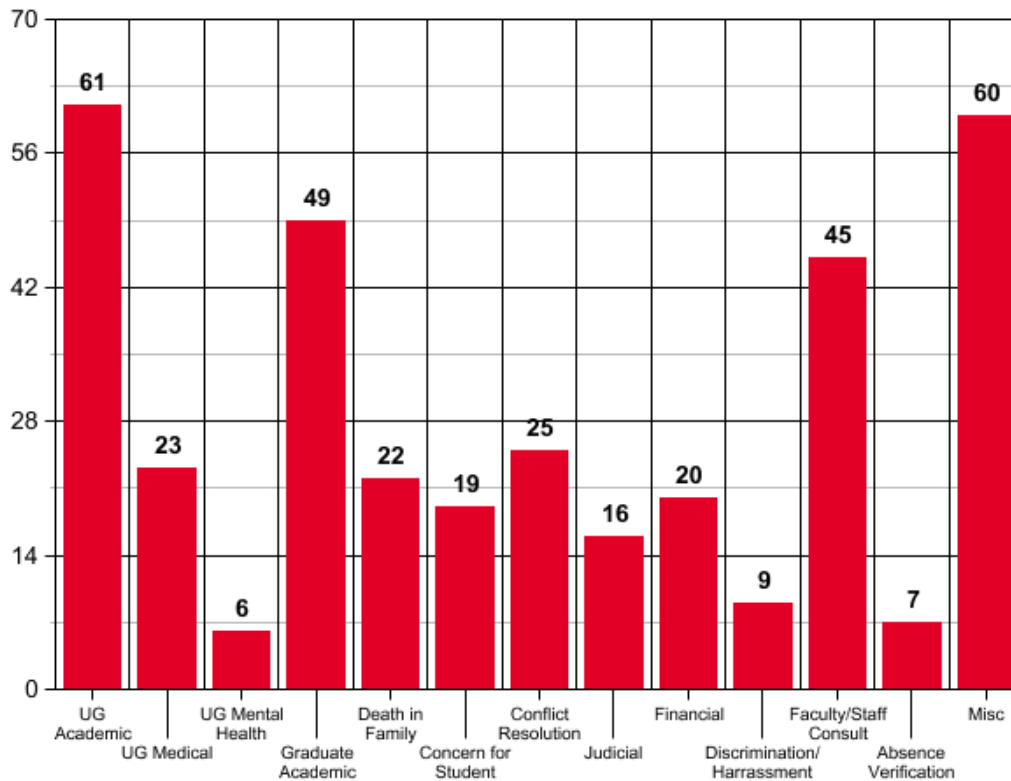
Student Ombuds Services Cases (since inception)



- 11% increase in cases over 2016-17.
- 26% increase in number of contacts over 2016-17.

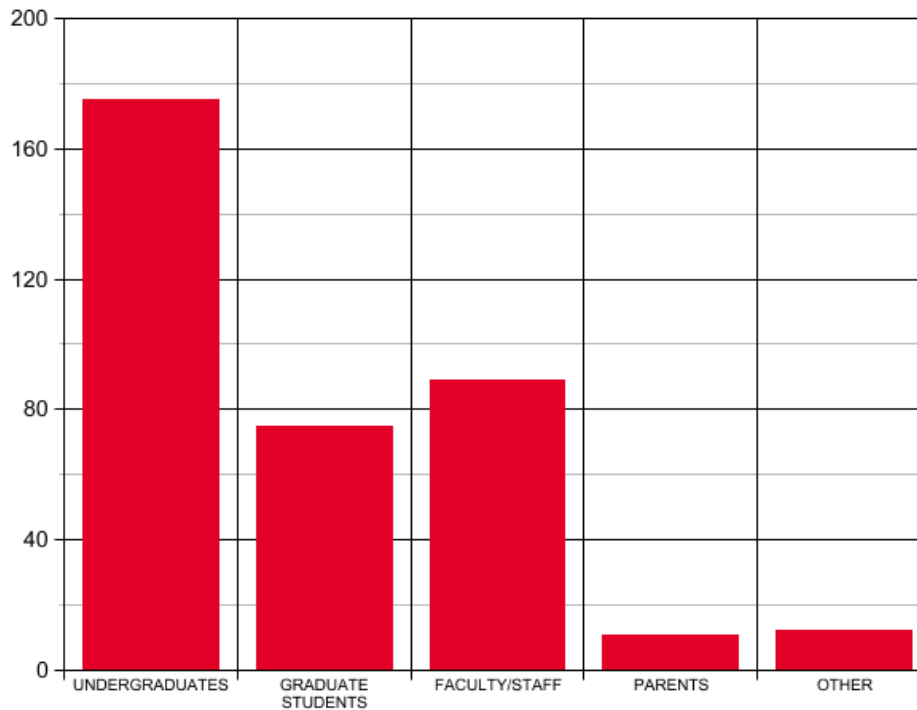
Note: Each visitor to the office constitutes a unique case (If there are multiple students involved in the same situation, collectively they are recorded as one case). A contact refers to each interaction with a visitor and any contacts made on their behalf to a campus entity.

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. Academic integrity cases continue to be the largest number of these cases.
- Most absence verification cases were handled by the AV Officer. Cases handled by SOS typically involved more complicated cases that required additional follow-up or support.

Visitor Status



- Most contacts from faculty/staff were to consult on a student related issue or share a concern about a student and represent an increase over the previous academic year.

Selected Cases & Recommendations

Recommendations are shared with units, departments, colleges and administrators on an ongoing basis. *(Note: This is a partial list and efforts have been taken to maintain confidentiality for the visitor. More specific issues and concerns are shared with the appropriate administrators per the Student Ombuds' charter).*

- Surfaced concern from student who wasn't being paid due to budget cuts. Department worked to resolve the issue.
- Shared student and parent concerns that the process in which faculty share concerns about academic integrity can be perceived as coercive. Recommended faculty not ask students to sign the form at the initial meeting, rather stress that students have two days before having to submit the RAIV form.
- Surfaced safety and organizational concerns with a field class. Department head agreed class should be reviewed before being taught again.

- Assisted Counseling Center to address misinformation posted on Facebook by students regarding charges for psychiatric services.
- Surfaced concerns to the bookstore regarding communication issues with new e-book program. Assisted by reviewing correspondence and provided feedback on the service.
- Provided observations and recommendations regarding the excused absence policy.
- Provided consultation on cases in which students falsified absence documentation.
- Served as a resource to collect student experiences in several departments at the request of faculty and department heads. Collated feedback and shared anonymously with departmental leaders so they could address concerns.
- Met with several students who were concerned about the manner in which they were terminated from their on-campus employment. Provided advice to department about how to document and communicate concerns about performance and appropriate protocols for terminating student employees.
- Visited international student in hospital who needed emergency surgery and didn't have family in country. Assisted with understanding hospital bills after surgery and helped set up payment plans.
- Assisted student who is on a fellowship at NC State and was in an accident while driving university vehicle. Worked with HR and Graduate School to better communicate policies about what constitutes being an employee and with Motor Pool regarding who is specifically covered under employee liability policy.
- Consulted with faculty member, Office of General Counsel and Office of Student Conduct on academic integrity case.
- Assisted student who had a conflict with her roommate over unpaid rent.
- Assisted students who were experiencing conflict among members of different student organizations.
- At the request of the department leadership, helped mediate conflict between a student and faculty member.
- At the request of a department, reviewed their website and provided feedback to ensure their services were student focused and intuitively presented on the website.
- Helped surface concern about how an advisor was treating advisees.
- Participated in discussion about student's need for emergency childcare.

Assessment:

- Based on a survey of visitors to Student Ombuds Services:
 - 100% indicated that scheduling was easy and convenient
 - 95% reported being able to meet with Ombuds in a timely manner
 - 98% said the Ombuds was courteous and helpful
 - 95% indicated Ombuds was objective throughout interactions
 - 98% reported the Ombuds was knowledgeable of institutional policies and procedures.
 - 93% trust the Ombuds to maintain confidentiality
 - 93% would refer others to Student Ombuds Services
- Selected comments from the survey included:
 - "I met with Mike rather quickly after the issue of which I raised to him and he was professional and courteous. He offered a viewpoint I had not thought of"
 - "I greatly value discussing student concerns with the Ombuds"
 - "...It can take courage and humility to sometimes ask for help, but speaking with the Ombuds was like speaking with a family member"
 - "Very professional, helped provide guidance on what my options were and who to contact, followed up with additional groups to propose policy/administrative changes to prevent similar issues in the future"
 - "He was very kind and helped me get through a hard time"