



1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132

Ombudsman Annual Report 2021-2022
Martha Paul, Interim Ombudsman for SFSU

Executive Summary

The office of the Ombudsman assists the San Francisco State University community in addressing workplace concerns. We are a resource that is neutral, independent, confidential, and informal.

Introduction

The 2021-22 Academic Year marks the third year I served as Employee Ombuds for San Francisco State University (SFSU). In that capacity, I have served all student employees and represented employees working under our 8 Collective Bargaining Agreements, confidential administrative assistants, and MPPs. I have operated in a dual capacity, working as the Employee Ombuds and as the Associate Director of Benefits, Leaves, and Retirement Services. This annual report describes the work I have engaged in while working as the Employee Ombuds and provides recommendations for the campus based on my observations.

Visitor Statistics since October 2020

Fiscal Year (FY)	Staff Visits	Faculty Visits	Administrator Visits	Total Visits
2020-2021 <i>(from 10/30/20)</i>	20	13	10	43 1.2/wk
2021-2022	20	47	18	85 1.6/wk
2022-2022 <i>(to 10/5/22)</i>	3	10	4	17 1.2/wk

Activities for 2021-2022

On Campus:

- **Employee Consultations:** served with all employees who sought my services about employment-related issues (see Visitor Statistics).
- **Training/Workshops:** performed training across campus on productive communication for the workplace, conflict management practices for the workplace, and addressing bullying/abrasive behavior in higher education.
- **Mediations:** performed multiple mediations over the year with employees seeking help resolving workplace conflicts.
- **Unit/Department Consultation:** acted in a consultative role with departments on campus experiencing challenges in relationships among employees in various circumstances.

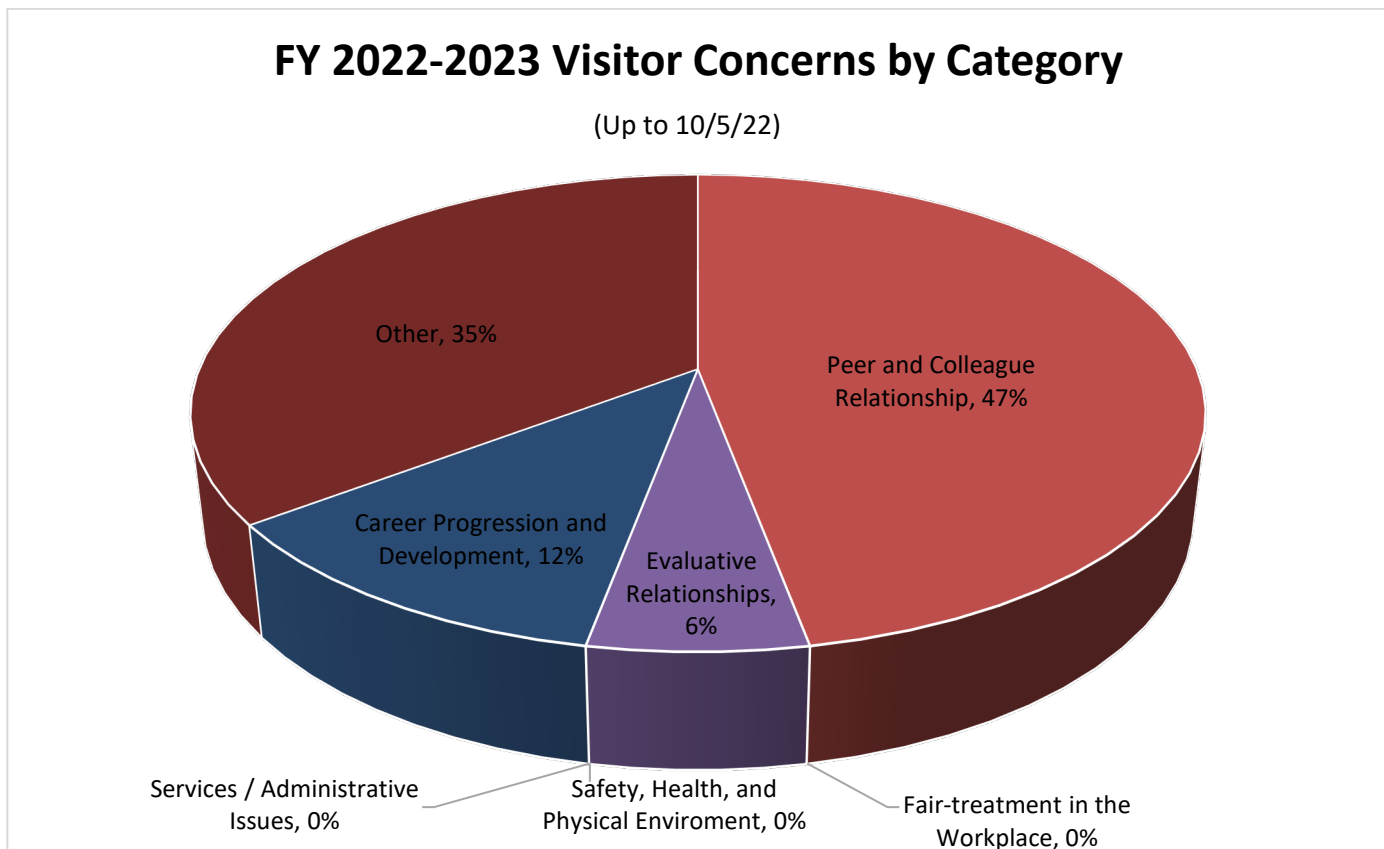
Professional Off Campus:

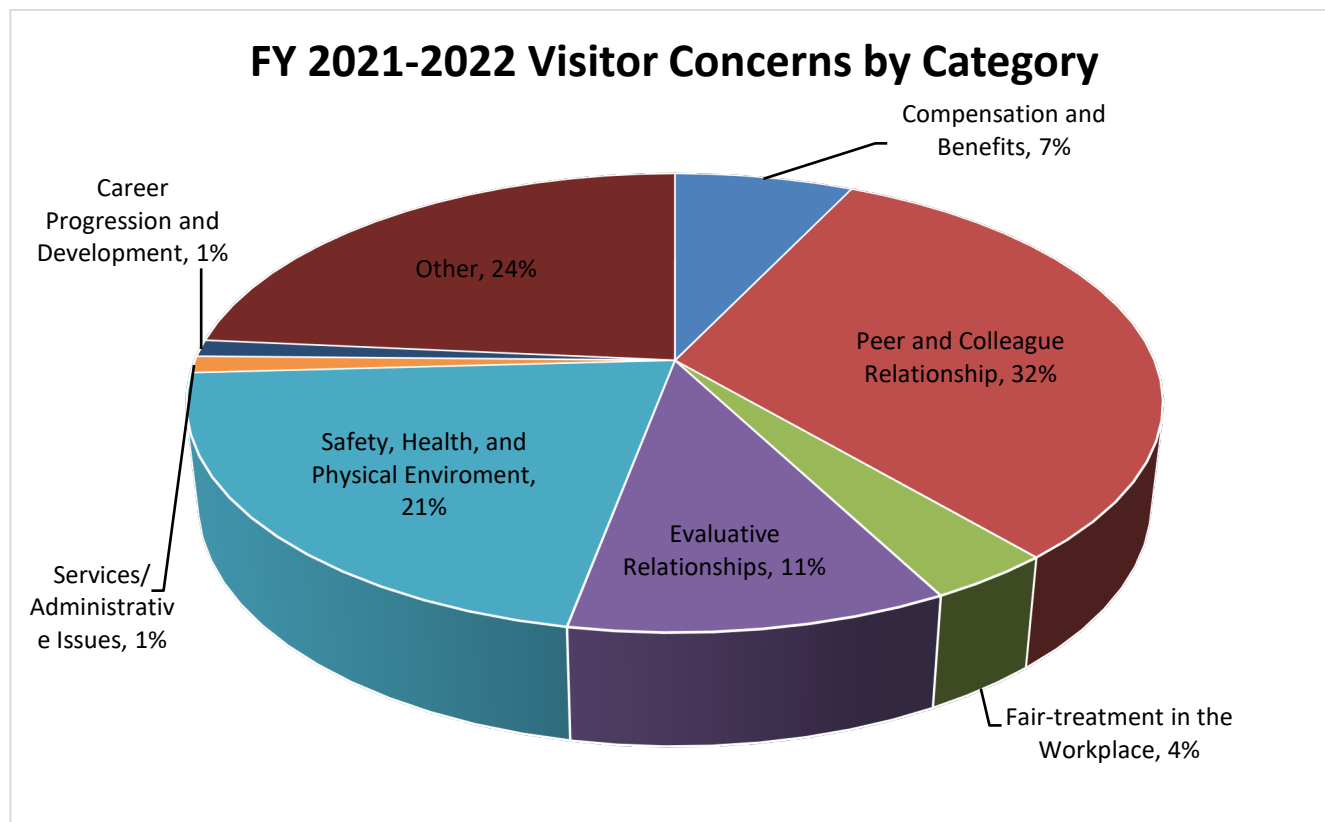
- International Ombudsman Association (IOA): a member of this organization is a member-led, professional association committed to supporting organizational ombuds worldwide.
- California Caucus of College and University Ombuds: Active member of this organization, which is an organization with international membership and a special focus on working in higher education.

Visitor Statistics

The IOA has developed uniform reporting categories for data collected by Ombuds Offices. As an active member of the organization, I have adopted the uniform reporting categories for SFSU records as well (see Appendix A for descriptions).

Visitors often had multiple concerns that spanned across the IOA reporting categories. This fiscal year up to 10/5, I have had a total of 17 employee contacts in my capacity as Ombudsperson, which is a decrease from the 26 employees I saw in this capacity during the same period during the 2020-21 academic year. I began in the Ombuds role in October 2020. Therefore, the number of employee contacts 43 for 2020-2021 is underrepresented. Of note is that I commenced the Ombuds role during the COVID pandemic, which logically affected the number of employee visits. Also, all contacts were conducted remotely. Below are the breakdowns of the visits for the current academic year up to October 5th and the previous academic year.





By far, the largest percentage of cases brought to the Ombuds Office involved “peer and colleague relationships.” Those accounted for 47% for far for 2022-2023 and 32% for 2021-2022 of the concerns that I heard in my role as Ombuds. The second most common concern category was the “other” category which had 35% in this academic year and 24% in 2021-2022.

Outcomes

The employees who visit the Office of the Ombudsman do so for many reasons. Sometimes they want to particular result; other times, they want to explore possible options before deciding whether to take action. As ombuds, one of our aims is to help all employees of the SFSU community become better able to resolve issues on their own if they can do so. In our cases, this is reflected in the largest single outcomes category. Many visitors from our cases talk to me about their concerns, consider different options, receive coaching, and then decide to proceed independently using the resolution strategies discussed in our office.

Appendix A: IOA Reporting Categories

1. **Compensation and Benefits:** *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness, and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits, and other benefit programs.*
2. **Evaluative Relationships:** *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (e.g. supervisor-supervisee, faculty-student).*

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships: *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship.*
4. Career Progression and Development: *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job and what it entails.*
5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance: *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries that may create a legal risk for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud, or abuse. (this category also includes discrimination and harassment).*
6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment: *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about Safety, Health, and Infrastructure-related issues.*
7. Services/Administrative Issues: *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about services or administrative offices from external parties.*
8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related: *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries related to the whole or some part of an organization.*
9. Values, Ethics, and Standards: *questions, concerns, issues, or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or procedures, or the need for the creation or revision of policies and/or standards.*

Appendix B: Overview of the Office of the Ombuds

In the Ombudsperson capacity, I complied with the Standards of Practice for the International Ombudsman Association to the largest extent possible. The Office of the Ombuds remains independent and confidential to the extent possible in the CSU, multi-partial and informal in practice. The Code of Ethics, established by the International Ombudsman³ Association, states that “the Ombudsman shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the organization he or she serves, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of those organizations’ practices, processes, and policies.” The ethical principles that are a part of this code include that the ombudsperson is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible in the organization; is designated as a neutral, remains unaligned and multi-partial, and does not engage in any situation which would create a conflict of interest; holds all communications with employees in strict confidence and does not disclose without permission unless there appears to be a risk of serious harm; does not participate in formal adjudicative or administrative procedures related to concerns brought to their attention.

A portion of the Dean of Equity Initiatives job description has been to act as the Senior Deputy Title IX Coordinator/DHR Administrator, which does engage in a formal process and is outside of the Standards of Practice for Ombuds. To address the conflict inherent in this contingent role, I refrained from investigating employee cases under EO 1096. As a Senior Deputy Title IX Coordinator/DHR Administrator, I served as a multi-partial case manager for employee cases to ensure a fair process was followed. I did not advocate for any party or any particular decision in those cases.

Like all employees in the CSU⁴, I must report if I hear of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or sexual misconduct, but the EO 1096 process on the SFSU campus does not compel employees to participate, and if employees choose not to participate or pursue options under EO 1096, they have that right. Under all circumstances, when employees brought such concerns, I sought their permission before reporting and helped them understand all options at their disposal.

We welcome you to contact us at any time to:

- Raise a workplace conflict concern involving yourself or other
- Consult with us about questions involving your team
- Refer a colleague to us
- Discuss or schedule a presentation about the Office of the Ombudsman
- Mediation between peers or leaders

For a confidential conversation, you may reach out to our office:

- ombuds@sfsu.edu