



# Faculty Ombudsperson Annual Report

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Indiana State University  
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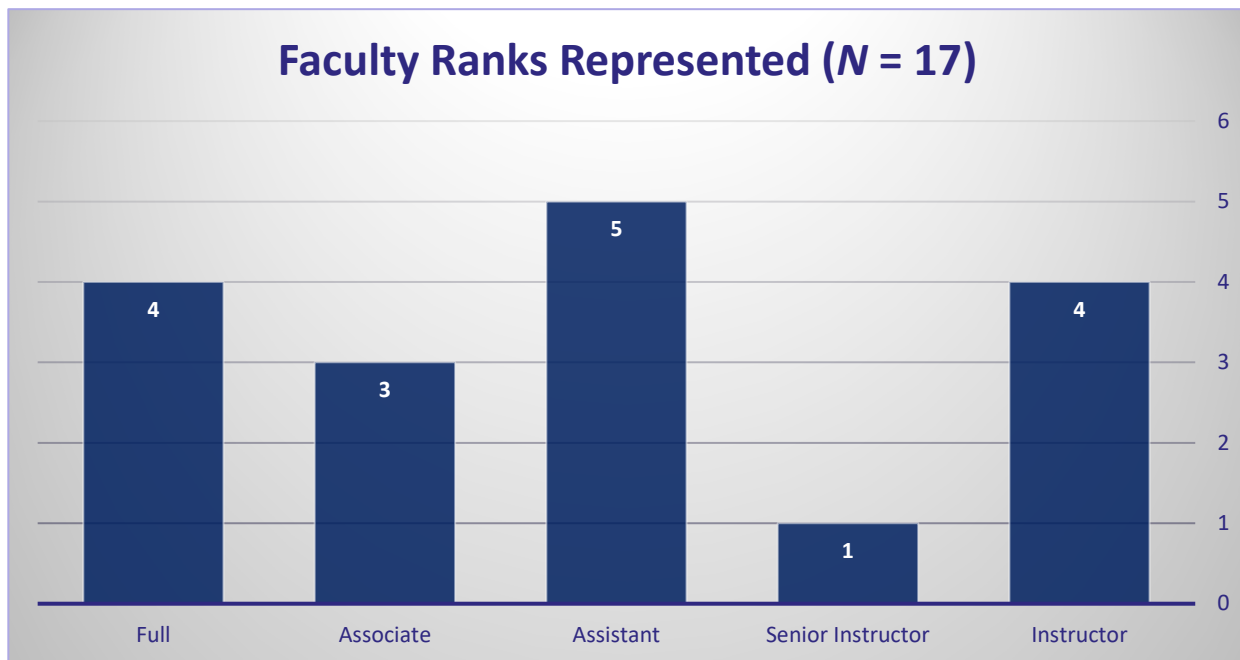
# Overview of Activities and Visitors

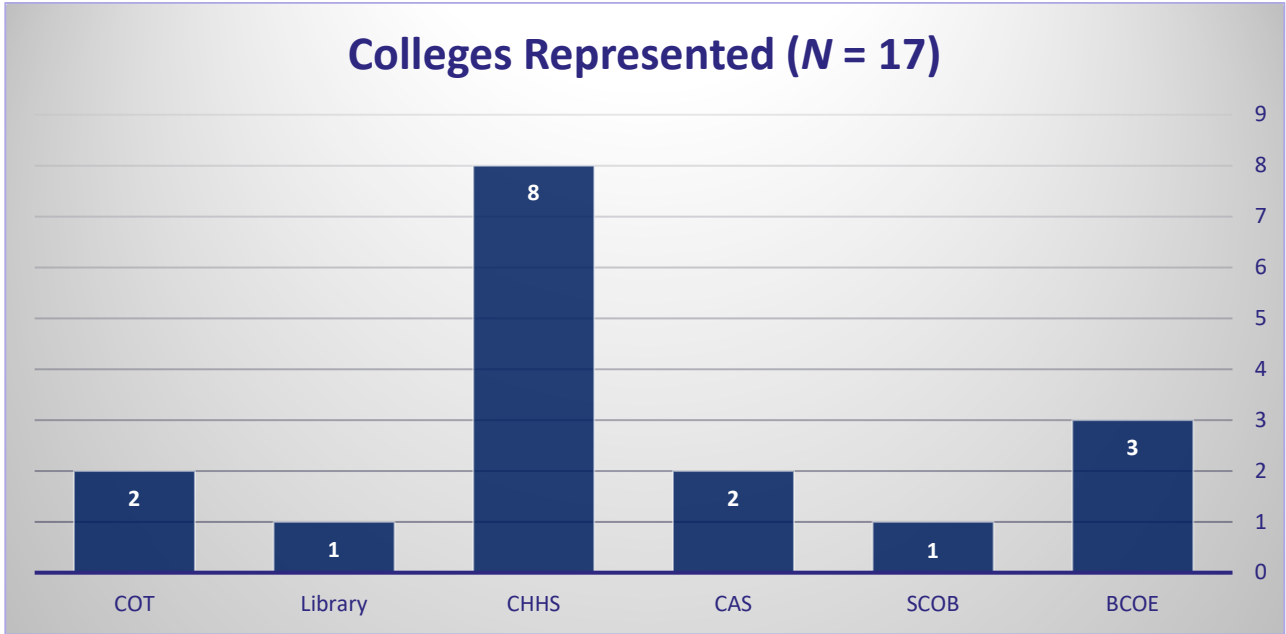
## Overview of Activities

- ◇ Approximately 20 hours meeting individually with visitors
- ◇ Approximately 5 hours of follow-up activities, including;
  - Researching/clarifying policy and resources
  - Seeking consultation regarding policy interpretation and implementation
  - Meeting with other individuals at visitors' request
- ◇ Website and informational material development

## Overview of Visitors

- ◇ Seventeen visitors used the ombuds office as individuals or in small groups
  - About 60% of visitors were female
- ◇ Visitors presented 16 primary concerns for discussion and consultation
  - Most visitors also identified a number of additional interrelated concerns (average concerns per visitor = 2; range = 1-6)
  - Average time per visitor concern: approximately 1.5 hours

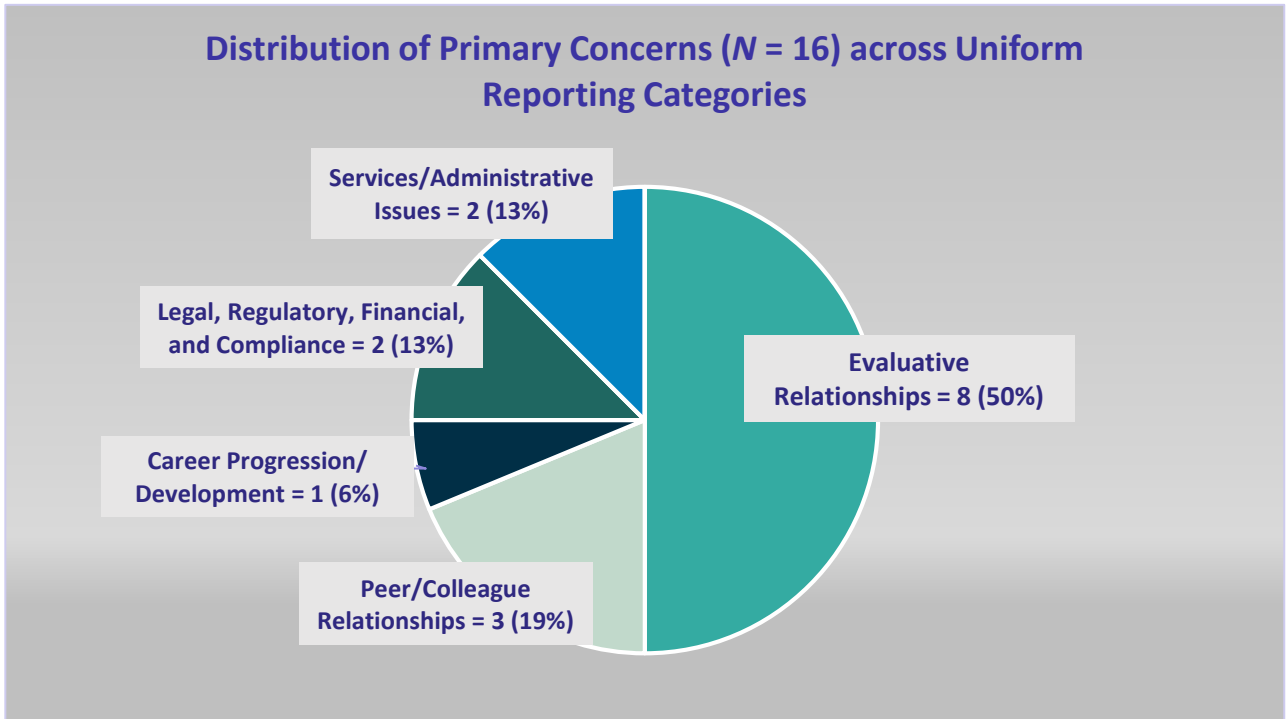




## Concerns and Issues Summary

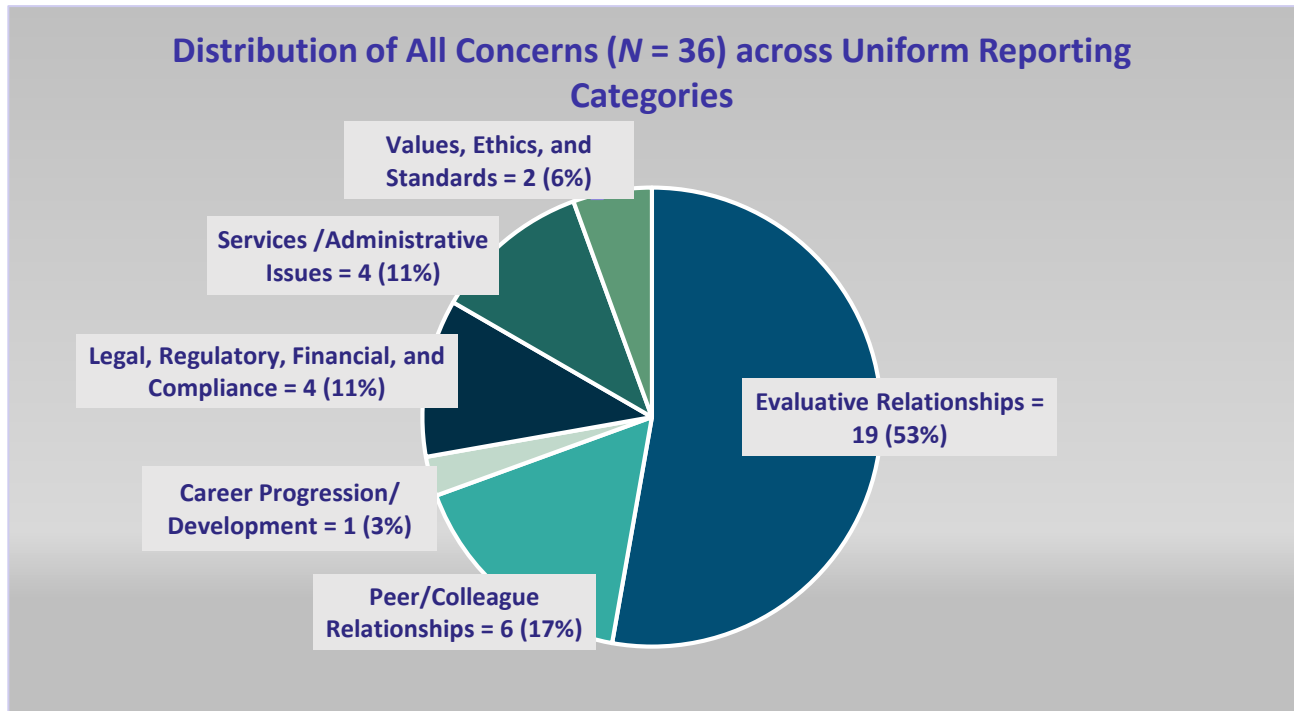
### Primary Concerns

The International Ombudsman Association uses Uniform Reporting Codes to categorize visitor concerns (see the Appendix for a summary). Each of the 16 primary concerns were categorized and are summarized in the chart below:



## All Concerns

Most visitors identified multiple concerns that were interrelated. In total, the ombuds office consulted with visitors about 36 distinct issues. These concerns were also categorized using the Uniform Reporting Codes, as summarized below:

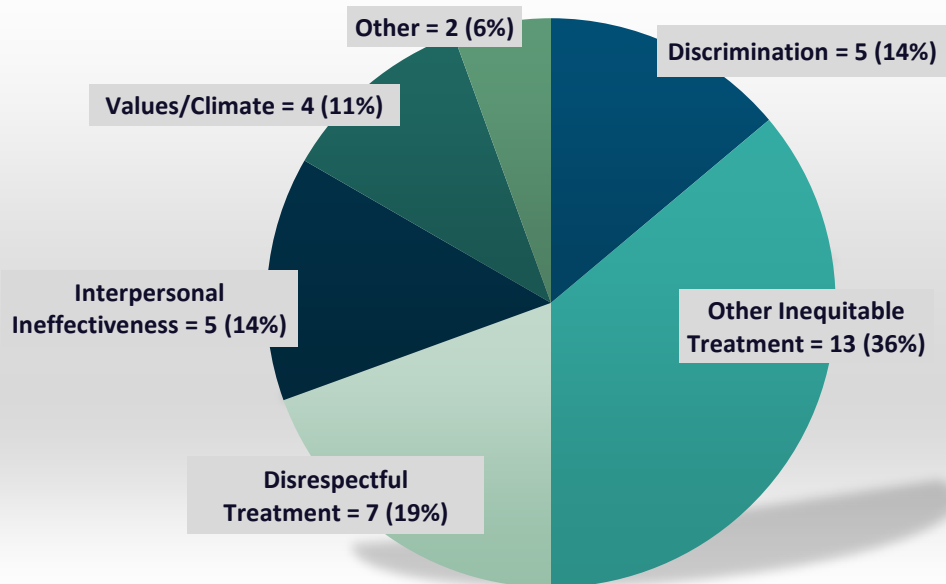


## Thematic Exploration

Some common themes of concern were observed across the Uniform Reporting Categories. These were aggregated according to the following definitions:

- ◇ **Discrimination** included concerns about differential unfair treatment due to a protected status, and specific discussions about taking formal action in response to harassment or discrimination.
- ◇ **Other Inequitable Treatment** included concerns about unfair or inconsistent applications of policy/practices, favoritism, and preferential treatment not based on a protected status.
- ◇ **Disrespectful Treatment** included concerns about disrespect, bullying/targeting, and perceived retaliation.
- ◇ **Interpersonal Ineffectiveness** included concerns related to poor communication or ineffective management/supervision practices.
- ◇ **Values/Climate** included concerns about poor climate/morale or differing ideas about professional values or acceptable standards of conduct.

## Common Themes Across Reporting Categories (N = 36)



## Summary

### Visitor Characteristics

- ◇ The gender distribution of office visitors was evenly distributed.
- ◇ Pre-tenure faculty and instructors comprised about half of all visitors.
- ◇ Half of all visitors were faculty in CHHS; however, at least one visitor from each academic college and the library utilized the office.

### Uniform Reporting Standards

- ◇ About half of visitor concerns pertained to evaluative relationships, with most visitors reporting multiple concerns in this category.
- ◇ Nearly 20% of concerns pertained to difficulties in peer/colleague interactions.
- ◇ Four concerns specifically involved the consideration of formal action due to harassment or discrimination.
- ◇ A majority of remaining concerns pertained to clarification of, perceived inequities in, and/or perceived failures to adhere to established policies and procedures. These included policies regarding:
  - ◇ Retention, promotion, and tenure
  - ◇ Faculty discipline and dismissal
  - ◇ Outside work
  - ◇ Extraordinary circumstances

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## Common Themes

- ◇ Concerns regarding discrimination, inequitable treatment, perceived bias, favoritism, or unfair applications of policy comprised 50% of concerns
- ◇ Poor interpersonal skills, including disrespectful, bullying, and retaliatory behaviors; poor communication; and ineffective supervisory practices represented an additional 33% of concerns.

## Recommendations

Based on the summary of common concerns and observed needs of faculty and administrators, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Chairpersons and Deans would benefit from regular participation in third-party mediation and/or informal conflict resolution training.
2. Faculty would benefit from regular opportunities to participate in informal conflict resolution training.
3. Faculty would benefit from having more individuals who are trained and willing to serve as informal peer mediators, and/or serve as support persons for faculty involved in formal grievance or disciplinary proceedings.
4. Interpersonal conflict and formal grievances may be reduced by administrators adopting a more active and neutral role in facilitating open dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.
5. Perceived inequities may be reduced by ensuring (a) policies and procedures are in writing when possible; (b) transparent communication regarding administrative decision-making processes; and (c) checks and balances to ensure policies and procedures are applied equitably (e.g., across individuals, departments, faculty ranks).

## Faculty Ombuds Office Strategic Priorities

The faculty ombuds office will pursue the following priorities during 2021-2022, to support the continued use and effectiveness of the office and to support the institution in accomplishing the recommendations included in this report.

1. Continue meeting with individual visitors and following up as needed to help resolve conflicts and concerns.

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2. Advertise the services of the office through the ombuds webpage and regular university communication channels.
  3. Finalize resource documents for publication on the ombuds webpage.
  4. Identify individuals willing to assist faculty in need of additional support and determine their training needs.
  5. If possible, partner with administration and/or Faculty Senate to identify appropriate conflict resolution training opportunities for faculty and administrators.
  6. Participate in evaluation of the ombuds office and the process for filling the faculty ombuds position for 2022-2025.

## Questions, Feedback, and Additional Information

**For more information about the ombuds office, visit:**

<https://www.indstate.edu/faculty-ombudsperson>

**Questions and concerns about this report may be directed to:**

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## Appendix: Uniform Reporting Categories Summary

The International Ombudsman Association (IOA) recommends the use of 9 uniform reporting categories to describe the nature of visitor questions and concerns. Each category is further subdivided to provide as much specificity as possible in classifying issues. A brief description of the broad categories appears below:

1. **Compensation & Benefits**—equity, appropriateness, or competitiveness of salary or benefits.
2. **Evaluative Relationships**—issues between people in evaluative or hierarchical relationships (e.g., chairs and faculty)
3. **Peer & Colleague Relationships**—issues between people of equal status
4. **Career Progression & Development**—appointment, re-appointment (e.g., promotion/tenure reviews, performance reviews), changes of assignment, non-reappointment (e.g., termination, position security/elimination), career development (e.g., coaching/mentoring), and separation (e.g., retirement, resignation).
5. **Legal, Regulatory, Financial, & Compliance**—issues that may create a legal risk or liability if not addressed (e.g., waste, fraud, abuse).
6. **Safety, Health, & Physical Environment**—infrastructure and safety/security.
7. **Services/Administrative Issues**—quality or professionalism of services provided by administrative offices and issues pertaining to the interpretation, application, and impact of administrative rules and policies.
8. **Organizational, Strategic, & Mission Related**—issues related to the management, leadership, strategic direction, or decision-making, and priorities of the organization.
9. **Values, Ethics, & Standards**—issues related to the equity and application of ethical and conduct standards of the organization and issues related to inequity in policy or procedure, or policies lacking/in need of revision.

### *Reference*

International Ombudsman Association (2007). *International Ombudsman Association Uniform Reporting Categories, Version 2*. Author. [IOA Uniform Data Reporting Categories Desk Reference](#)