

**Cornell University**  
**Office of the University Ombudsman**  
**45<sup>th</sup> Annual Report (July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014)**

**I. The Office of the University Ombudsman: History, Role and Tenets**

**History**

The Office of the University Ombudsman was established in 1969. At that time, an ad hoc committee, chaired by Arts and Sciences Dean Alfred Kahn, recommended the establishment of the Ombudsman Office to President Corson. The proposed function of the office was to provide an independent venue where community members may come to discuss problems or issues within the University. Rather than taking a side on an issue, the Ombudsman's role is to advocate for fairness and equity.

The original Guidelines for the Office of the University Ombudsman, functioning as our Charter, are largely adopted from the 1969 Kahn report and remained in place through 2013. While the heart of the original Guidelines is largely unchanged, last year the Ombudsman Office updated this historical document to make it consistent with our practice of operating according to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. On April 30, 2013, the University Assembly passed a resolution to adapt the updated Guidelines for the Office of the University Ombudsman. On June 7, 2013 President David Skorton accepted the resolution. The Guidelines are available on the Ombudsman Office website.

**Role**

The Ombudsman Office offers a safe place where students, faculty and staff may speak confidentially about a conflict and obtain guidance. We offer a unique setting where community members may talk about issues in an open and candid manner without fear of reprisal. As part of Cornell University's caring community, our efforts are geared toward managing conflict, thereby improving the student life experience and the work environment.

We refer to the individuals we assist as "visitors" instead of "clients," as a reference to clients connotes an advisory relationship, instead of a neutral one. We assist visitors in several ways:

- Provide a welcoming environment to listen to visitor concerns
- Assist the visitor in evaluating available options
- Provide information on University policies and practices
- Provide information on how to make the University aware of a particular problem
- Refer the visitor to the proper authority to resolve the situation
- Facilitate constructive dialogue
- While maintaining confidentiality, alert the appropriate administrator when a systemic issue occurs

The Ombudsman Office is available to all students, faculty and staff affiliated with all units of Cornell University, excluding the Weill Cornell Medical College.

The Ombudsman Office, as part of Cornell's caring community, is committed to assisting community members when they are most in need. A few examples of issues for which a visitor may seek Ombudsman services include the following: conflicts with colleagues or supervisors, conflicts with an advisor, concerns about job status, or an ethics inquiry. Whatever the issue, the meeting is tailored to the particular concerns of the visitor. The visitor controls the process.

The Ombudsman offers a sounding board. Sometimes the visitor is most in need of respectful and active listening to address his or her concern.

The Ombudsman coaches the visitor for a difficult conversation. Sometimes a visitor needs help identifying appropriate language to engage in a constructive conversation to resolve his or her issue.

The Ombudsman provides information about University policies and procedures. Sometimes the visitor needs a confidential setting to ask about policy concerns. In particular, the Ombudsman offers a confidential and knowledgeable place to listen to ethical concerns. By offering a safe place for community members to understand their options, including policies and procedures and reporting options, the Ombudsman serves to safeguard constructive reporting.

The Ombudsman refers the visitor to other office(s) and/or to the appropriate authority to resolve a situation. Sometimes a visitor is overwhelmed and needs a safe "starting point " to find out what office can address his or her concerns.

The Ombudsman helps the visitor to reframe an issue and to identify the options available to him or her. Sometimes a visitor needs a safe and neutral place to realize he or she has options and to appropriately weigh those options.

## **Tenets**

The Ombudsman Office adheres to the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, as follows:

### **Independence**

The Ombudsman is independent in structure, function and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

### **Neutrality and Impartiality**

The Ombudsman, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombudsman strives to promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of Cornell's practices, processes and policies. The Ombudsman does not engage in any situation that could create a conflict of interest.

### **Confidentiality**

The Ombudsman holds the identity and all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so, except as required by law, or where, in the judgment of the Ombudsman, there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm.

### **Informality**

The Ombudsman, as an informal resource, does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention. As an informal resource, the Ombudsman is not authorized to accept notice (formal complaints) for Cornell University. Moreover, because the Ombudsman holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, subject to the limited exceptions detailed above, the Ombudsman will not forward information received in confidence.

## II. Ombudsman Office Personnel

As the Cornell University Guidelines for the Office of the University Ombudsman provide in conjunction with the University Assembly (UA) Charter, the President appoints the Ombudsman with the concurrence of the UA. Since 1969, the Ombudsman has been a senior faculty member who staffs the office with the Associate and Assistant Ombudsman. The Ombudsman Office is staffed by the Ombudsman, serving on a part-time basis, the Associate Ombudsman, serving full-time and the Assistant Ombudsman, serving part-time.

In July 2011, Charles (Charlie) Walcott was named the University's twelfth Ombudsman. Charlie was re-appointed in July 2013. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University and his Ph.D. from Cornell University. He served on the faculty of Harvard University, Tufts University and the State University of New York at Stony Brook before coming to Cornell in 1981 as a full professor and Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Charlie was named the Lab's first Louis Agassiz Fuytes Director in 1992. He left that position in 1995 to resume teaching and research and went on to lead the Division of Biological Sciences (1998-99) and the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior (1999-2001) before serving for three years as Associate Dean and Secretary of the University Faculty. He also served as Dean of the University Faculty (2003-08) and the Chair of the University Assembly (Fall 2009 - Spring 2011). In addition to his role as Ombudsman, Charlie is an emeritus faculty member. Charlie is an expert on the territorial vocalizations of birds and animal navigation.

In April 2008, Linda Falkson was appointed Assistant Ombudsman and she was promoted to Associate Ombudsman in October 2010. Prior to receiving this appointment, she served as Cornell's Associate Judicial Administrator and then as Deputy Judicial Administrator for ten years. In this capacity, she adjudicated alleged Code of Conduct violations and she collaborated with community partners regarding the living and learning environment for students. Linda sought to further serve the Cornell community by helping individuals in the Ombudsman Office. Before her employment at Cornell, she engaged in general legal practice, including criminal defense and in prosecution. Linda received a Bachelor of Science from Cornell University and a Juris Doctor from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Linda is a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner®.

In January 2011, Adam Barak Kleinberger joined the office as Assistant Ombudsman. He began his study of conflict resolution in 1990 at the United World College, learning with students from over 70 countries. Adam gained experience at the Consensus Building Institute in Cambridge, MA, mediating in Massachusetts' district courts and working with students, faculty and staff at City University of New York (CUNY) serving as a Higher Education Associate. Adam's research has focused on improving mediation skills through the use of improvisation and clowning. He holds a BA from Brandeis University, an MA in Dispute Resolution from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a diploma from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College. Adam is a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner®.

In April 2014, Adam Kleinberger resigned from the part-time Assistant Ombudsman position to accept the full-time position of Associate Ombudsman at Boston University. Following his departure, Linda and Charlie examined the needs of the office. Based on that analysis, Charlie and Linda made a decision to create the full-time position of Ombudsman Office Coordinator rather than filling the part-time Assistant Ombudsman position. The search to fill this Coordinator position was underway at the close of the 2013-14 year.

Charlie and Linda appreciate the more than three years of dedicated service that Adam provided to the Cornell community. We wish to acknowledge his many contributions, including his work in assisting visitors facing conflict and his many fine presentations and publications.

Charlie and Linda are grateful to continue to serve as Cornell Ombudsman.

### **III. Educational Outreach and Community Involvement**

In an effort to make sure that community members facing conflict know about ombudsman services, we have significantly increased outreach efforts over the past several years. This has included offering presentations about the Ombudsman Office, informal meetings, resource fairs and other outreach efforts. A selection of this past year's community involvement is described below.

#### **Office Brochure**

In a purposeful way, we continue to increase the distribution of the office brochure (last updated 2011-2012) around campus. Among other places, it is available in University libraries, Willard Straight Hall, Carol Tatkon Center, and many other locations around campus.

#### **Website**

The Ombudsman Office website continues to be regularly updated.

We also update the information regarding our services that can be found on other websites around the University. We systematically review all Cornell websites that reference the Ombudsman Office and we make suggestions for changes in language, where appropriate, to most accurately describe the work of the Ombudsman Office. Also, if our office is not mentioned on a relevant website, we suggest being added. We are committed to ensuring that Cornell websites publicize our most up to date information.

#### **Campus Mailer (Mass Electronic Mailing)**

As reported in 2011-2012, we developed a Cornell Ombudsman informational card. This card educates community members about ombudsman services and provides office contact information. In November/December 2013 and again in March 2014 we sent an electronic version of the informational card to all students and to all faculty and staff to remind them of Ombudsman services.

#### **Posters**

In 2013 we developed an Ombudsman Office poster describing Ombudsman services. Attached to the poster are tear-off cards with office contact information. Posters were put up on bulletin boards in residence halls, dining facilities, and central campus academic and administrative buildings in both fall and spring semesters.

#### **Parent Newsletter**

In spring 2014 an informational paragraph describing the services offered by the Ombudsman Office as a campus resource appeared in the Parents Newsletter 2014, an e-newsletter sent to the parents of all current students.

#### **Presentations**

Presentations regarding ombudsman services were made to the following groups:

- New Supervisor Orientation Certificate Program (This presentation is delivered four times a year.)

- Office Professionals Certificate Program (This presentation was offered in spring, 2014)

## **Reports**

The Ombudsman Office reports statistical and non-identifying information on Ombudsman Office activity to the community. In the spring term we appeared before the University Assembly to make a report and to answer questions.

## **Employee Representative Training**

While the Ombudsman Office does not participate in grievance procedures or other formal processes, HR Policy 6.11.4, Staff Complaint and Grievance Procedure, states that the Office of the University Ombudsman will assist staff in obtaining representation, or, in other words, in obtaining an employee representative (employee rep). The employee rep is someone who supports the employee during the grievance process. To accomplish this objective, the Ombudsman Office publicizes this volunteer opportunity to community members, provides yearly training to the employee reps and connects staff to an available employee rep when needed.

In August, 2013, the Ombudsman office appeared before the Employee Assembly (EA) to appeal to the EA to help identify employee reps. The EA was instrumental in identifying several new reps. In collaboration with the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations, a training for the new and continuing employee reps was held in December, 2013.

The employee reps represent Cornell's genuine commitment to insure that employees utilizing the grievance process are supported throughout the stages of the grievance. We commend the employee reps for volunteering their time to assist fellow employees.

## **Resource Fairs**

In 2013-2014, we expanded our involvement in campus resource fairs.

During the August orientation period for new students, we participated in the following four student resource fairs:

New Student Check-In: For the second time, we participated in the New Student Check-In event in Barton Hall. This was an opportunity to introduce new students and their parents to the Ombudsman Office.

Johnson School Orientation Information Fair: For the first time, we participated in the Johnson School Orientation Information Fair to introduce new Johnson students to the Ombudsman Office.

Residential Programs Student Staff Resource Fair: For the first time, we participated in the Residential Programs Student Staff Resource Fair, which afforded an opportunity to interface with orientation leaders, resident advisors, and other residential student staff regarding Ombudsman Office services.

Graduate and Professional Student Orientation Resource Fair: For the first time we also participated in the Graduate and Professional Student Orientation Resource Fair, affording us an opportunity to introduce new graduate students to the Ombudsman Office.

We have also sought to interface with staff during campus resource fairs, and we participated in the following:

BeneFair: For the second year, we participated in the Open Enrollment BeneFair. The BeneFair provides faculty and staff with an opportunity to meet with benefit services and representatives from partnering vendors regarding Cornell benefits.

We appreciate the opportunity to interface with faculty and staff regarding Ombudsman services during the BeneFair.

### **Professional Development**

All Cornell Ombudsman are members of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA). As resources permit, we attend IOA conferences and trainings to keep abreast of the Ombudsman field and topics related to our work as organizational ombudsman.

#### National and Regional Ombudsman Meetings:

In fall, 2013, Adam and Linda attended the East Coast Ombudsman Group (ECOG) meeting at MIT.

In spring, 2014, Charlie attended the East Coast Ombudsman Group ECOG meeting at MIT.

In spring, 2014, Linda and Adam attended the International Ombudsman Association 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.

#### Other Professional Development:

Linda, Charlie and Adam participated in professional development regarding the issues of inclusiveness and diversity and combatting micro-inequities<sup>1</sup> and bullying as follows:

Film series: In fall, 2013, all three Ombudsman viewed the film “Race: The Power of an Illusion” and participated in facilitated discussions.

Diversity Update Conference: In fall, 2013, Linda attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Cornell University Diversity Update Conference, which included an extensive discussion of “bullying in the ivory tower.”

Inclusive Excellence Academy: In spring, 2014, Charlie, Linda and Adam attended the Cornell University Inclusive Excellence Academy session “Proactively Addressing Bias and Micro-Inequities in the Workplace” presented by Ernest Hicks, Retired Manager of Corporate Diversity, Xerox Corporation.

Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) anti-bullying workshop: In spring, 2014, Linda attended a workshop hosted by the SHRM of Tompkins County entitled “Workplace Bullying: What Everyone Needs to Know” presented by KC Wagner, Director of Workplace Issues, ILR School.

### **Professional Publications and Presentations**

In October, 2013, Charlie and Linda provided a training seminar to faculty members at Hobart & William Smith Colleges regarding the role of the Organizational Ombudsman.

In November, 2013, Adam gave a guest lecture for a class entitled “Conflict Mediation: Theory and Practice” at Gordon College in Wenham, MA.

In November, 2013, Adam was published in *The Independent Voice* as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> The terms micro-inequities (and micro-affirmations) were coined by retired MIT Ombudsman Mary Rowe, PhD.

Kleinberger, A. B. (2013, Nov). Favorite questions of Ombuds. *The Independent Voice*, 8-9.

In April, 2013, Adam delivered a half-day pre-conference course at the International Ombudsman Association 9th Annual Conference as follows:

Kleinberger, A. B. (2014). Improvisation, intuition and spontaneity: A new approach for the ombuds trainer. International Ombudsman Association 9th Annual Conference, Denver, CO.

### **Ad Hoc Mediation Group**

The Ombudsman Office continues to meet with staff from the Scheinman Institute on Conflict Resolution at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) and other members of an ad hoc group to examine interest in mediation services at Cornell.

### **Restorative Justice Group**

Linda attended several meetings with an Assistant Dean of Students and two members of the Student Assembly regarding the implementation of restorative justice practices in the handling of bias incidents.

### **Ombudsman Role in Election Appeals**

An antiquated provision of the election rules for the Student Assembly, Employee Assembly, University Assembly, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, and Student and Employee Elected Trustees charges the Ombudsman with reviewing the election committee's ruling of a challenge as to whether the "committee ruling was in compliance with the election rules..."

The Ombudsman sought to be removed from this role as the Ombudsman is a designated neutral and does not take sides in disputes. Rather, the Ombudsman advocates for fairness and equity. Further, the Ombudsman does not conduct formal investigative or adjudicative procedures or make decisions.

Given the Ombudsman's role, the Ombudsman recommended that the election rules be changed so that the Ombudsman's role in the election rules is replaced with another person or office charged with reviewing the Appeal.

The Ombudsman very much appreciates the Assemblies responsiveness to this request. The election rules for each of the Assemblies no longer mention Ombudsman as reviewer, but instead read "Senior Director of Campus Relations" as reviewer.

### **Other Outreach, Collaboration and Community Involvement**

To further communicate ombudsman services at Cornell, we meet with staff from a range of offices, partner in community events and attend forums. We attended the following meetings:

- Workforce Policy and Labor Relations
- Human Resources benefits specialists, regarding the Affordable Care Act
- Organizational Effectiveness
- Cornell Commitment Office regarding Meinig Scholar Project
- Meetings with new Dean(s)
- Meeting with Student Assembly members regarding a proposed judicial commission
- Meeting with the Office of the Assemblies
- Employee forums, webinars and other community events

We continue to expand our community engagement to highlight the availability of ombudsman services for all Cornell community members. We are committed to outreach as a long-term and sustained effort.

#### **IV. Reporting Categories**

The Guidelines for the Office of the University Ombudsman state that the Ombudsman Office provides an Annual Report to the community.

We operate as an informal resource and ombudsman meetings are confidential. Accordingly, the report communicates non-identifiable data and overall trends to the community. Each year we critically examine the best practice for reporting to our community.

We track the following:

- Number of Visitors
- Constituency (of the visitor)
- Problem Areas (the reason why the visitor seeks ombudsman services)

#### **Number of Visitors**

A visitor is considered an individual who meets with the Ombudsman regarding one or more Problem Areas. The visitor may have additional follow-up meetings with the Ombudsman but the meetings are still tallied as one visitor. However, if the same visitor meets with the Ombudsman on a different occasion, regarding a new Problem Area, then he/she would be considered a new visitor. For example, a student (visitor) might meet with the Ombudsman several times in January regarding a financial aid issue and come back again in May to meet about a grading/graduation issue. The January meetings would be counted as one visitor and the May meeting would be counted as one visitor.

#### **Constituency**

Our visitors represent the following constituency groups:

- Academic Employee
- Graduate or Professional Student
- Non-Academic Employee
- Student-Affiliated (Alumni, Parents etc.)
- Undergraduate Student
- Other (Anonymous, Outside, etc.)

#### **Problem Areas**

Visitors meet with the Ombudsman about problems, concerns or conflicts. We refer to the various issues, the reason why the visitor seeks ombudsman services, as the “Problem Area.” All Problem Areas represent issues brought to the attention of the Ombudsman by the visitor. As an informal resource, the Ombudsman does not conduct investigations, participate in formal adjudicative processes or otherwise verify the issues. While the Problem Area represents the subjective view of the visitor, it is nonetheless an area of concern for him or her. Visitors meet with the Ombudsman about the following seven broad Problem Areas:

- Academic Actions
- Administrative Actions
- Business and Services



- Employment
- Human Rights
- Interpersonal Disputes
- Values, Ethics and Standards

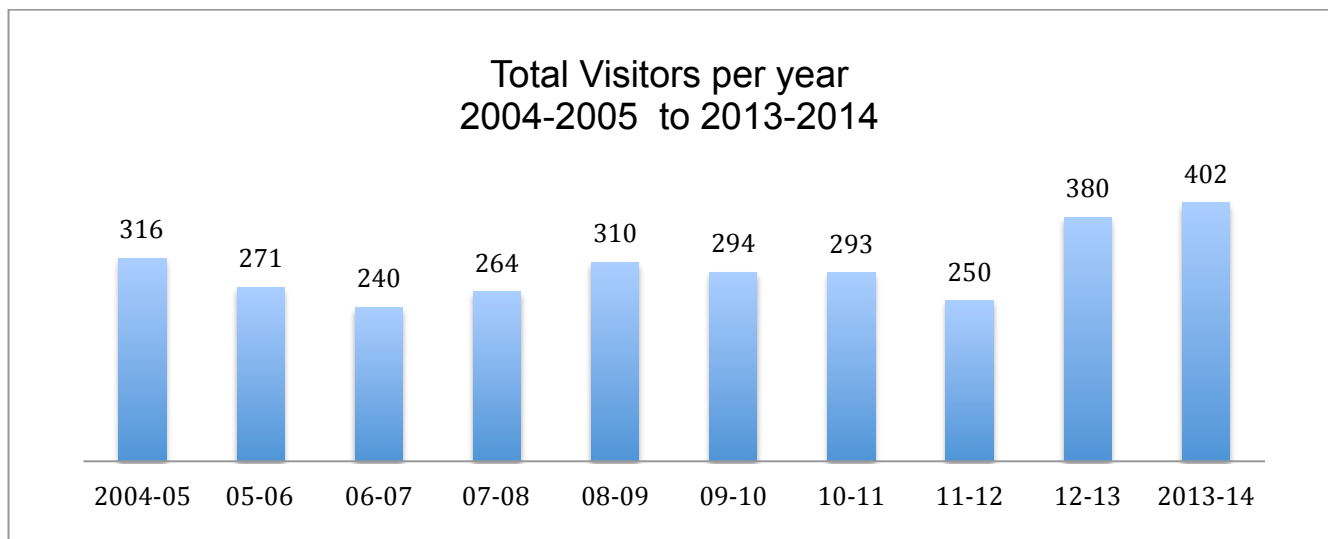
Each of the Problem Areas is represented by multiple subcategories that more specifically describe the visitor’s issue. Academic Actions includes subcategories such as advising, grading and graduate committee issues. Administrative Actions includes subcategories such as access to files, fees, holds and registration. Business and Services includes subcategories such as facilities, financial aid and transportation. Employment includes subcategories such as discipline, supervision and tenure. Human Rights contains the subcategories of perceived discrimination and perceived sexual harassment. Finally, Values, Ethics and Standards include subcategories such as an ethics inquiry, conflict of interest and academic misconduct.

### V. Number of Visitors Data

A visitor is considered an individual who meets with the Ombudsman regarding one or more Problem Areas.

The total number of visitors in 2013-2014 was 402.

Total Visitors per year from 2004-2005 to 2013-2014:



Over the past ten years the number of visitors per year has ranged from 240 to 402. There was an increase in the number of visitors of 6% from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014. A number of factors relate to a visitor’s decision whether to seek out ombudsman services. The intensity of the conflict, the readiness of the community member to consider working on the problem and the knowledge that the Ombudsman Office is approachable are all part of the equation. Many times a positive “word of mouth” referral is helpful. Outreach efforts are influential.

Indeed, after sending the Cornell Ombudsman information card to community members in both the fall (November/December) and spring (March) terms, the Ombudsman Office experienced an increase in visitor meetings during these time intervals. We believe that the overall increase in the number of visitors over the past two years is correlated with outreach.

These bare statistics give no sense of the complexity and amount of time devoted to each visitor. Some visitors have quite straightforward issues and can be helped with a single visit. Others require multiple visits and a substantial amount of work between sessions. With the increase in the number of visitors, we have not seen an increase in the fraction of simple cases. The range and complexity of issues is much the same as it has always been.

One message that we receive from this data is that there is an unmet need for ombudsman services. Whenever we reach out, there is an increase in the number of visitors. This suggests that we need to continue to publicize the availability of the Ombudsman Office to increase awareness within the Cornell community. Our goal is to reach all community members in need of assistance and, more importantly, to meet with visitors for problem solving before a situation has escalated into an entrenched conflict or dispute that is difficult to manage and for which finite options exist.

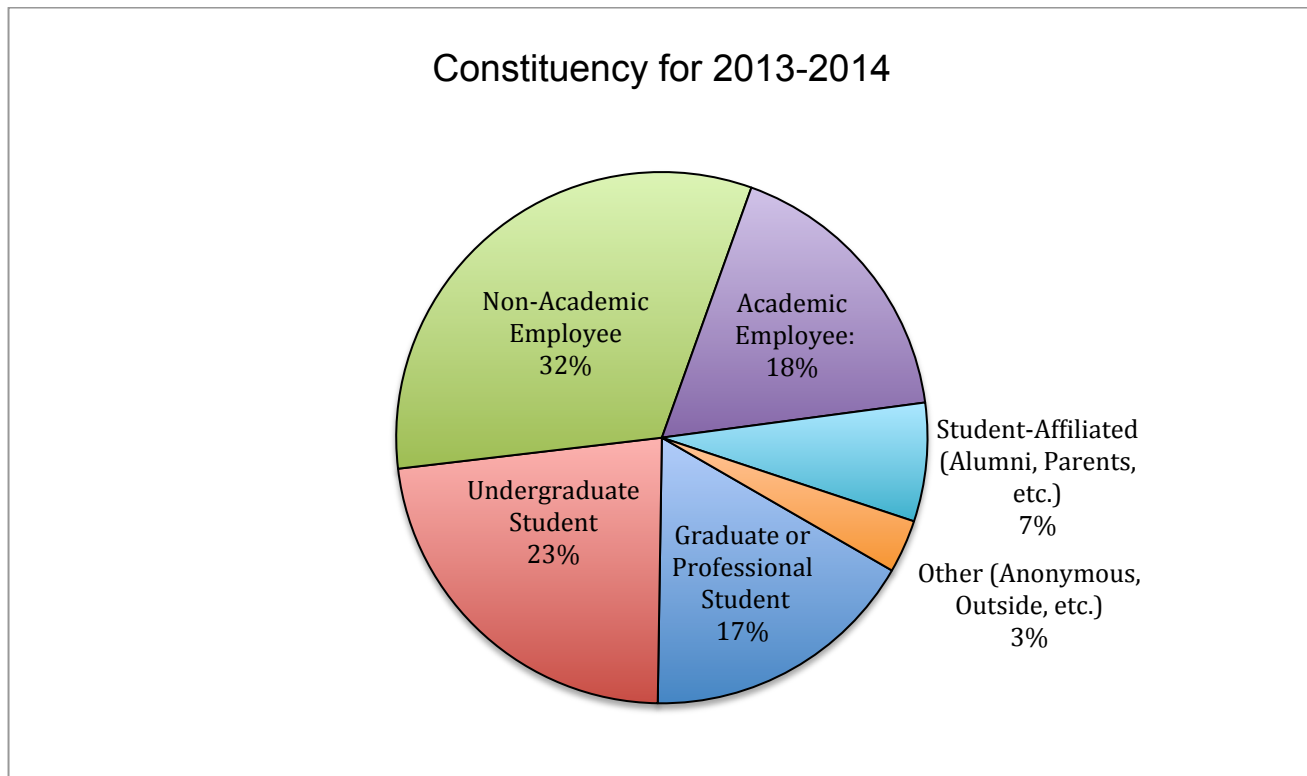
## VI. Constituency Data

The visitors to the Ombudsman Office represent the following constituency groups:

- Academic Employee
- Graduate or Professional Student
- Non-Academic Employee
- Student-Affiliated (Alumni, Parents, etc.)
- Undergraduate Student
- Other (Anonymous, Outside, etc.)

Total Constituency in 2013-2014:

Constituency	2013-2014
Academic Employee:	70
Professors (Assistant, Associate, Full)	(41)
Other Faculty (e.g. Research Associate, Sr. Lecturer, etc.)	(29)
Graduate or Professional Student	68
Non-Academic Employee	130
Student-Affiliated (Alumni, Parents, etc.)	29
Undergraduate Student	92
Other (Anonymous, Outside, etc.)	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>402</b>



Total Constituency per year 2004-2005 to 2013-2014:

Constituency	2004-2005	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	2013-2014
Academic Employee	43	30	39	32	43	48	58	59	62	70
Graduate or Professional Student	35	29	26	31	32	28	30	47	55	68
Non-Academic Employee	98	75	75	80	98	112	82	71	145	130
Student-Affiliated	35	34	25	30	31	24	22	16	16	29
Undergraduate Student	86	91	63	67	95	71	76	43	80	92
Other	19	12	12	24	11	11	25	14	22	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>402</b>

This past year reflects the largest number of visitors in (at least) ten years. The increase in visitors is specially noted with respect to the student-related constituency groups (graduate or professional student, undergraduate student and student-affiliated).

Non-academic employees have historically been the largest constituency group to visit the Ombudsman Office, and this year was no exception. While the number of visitors in this group declined slightly compared to 2012-2013, that number was still significantly higher than the average number of visitors in this category over the past ten years.

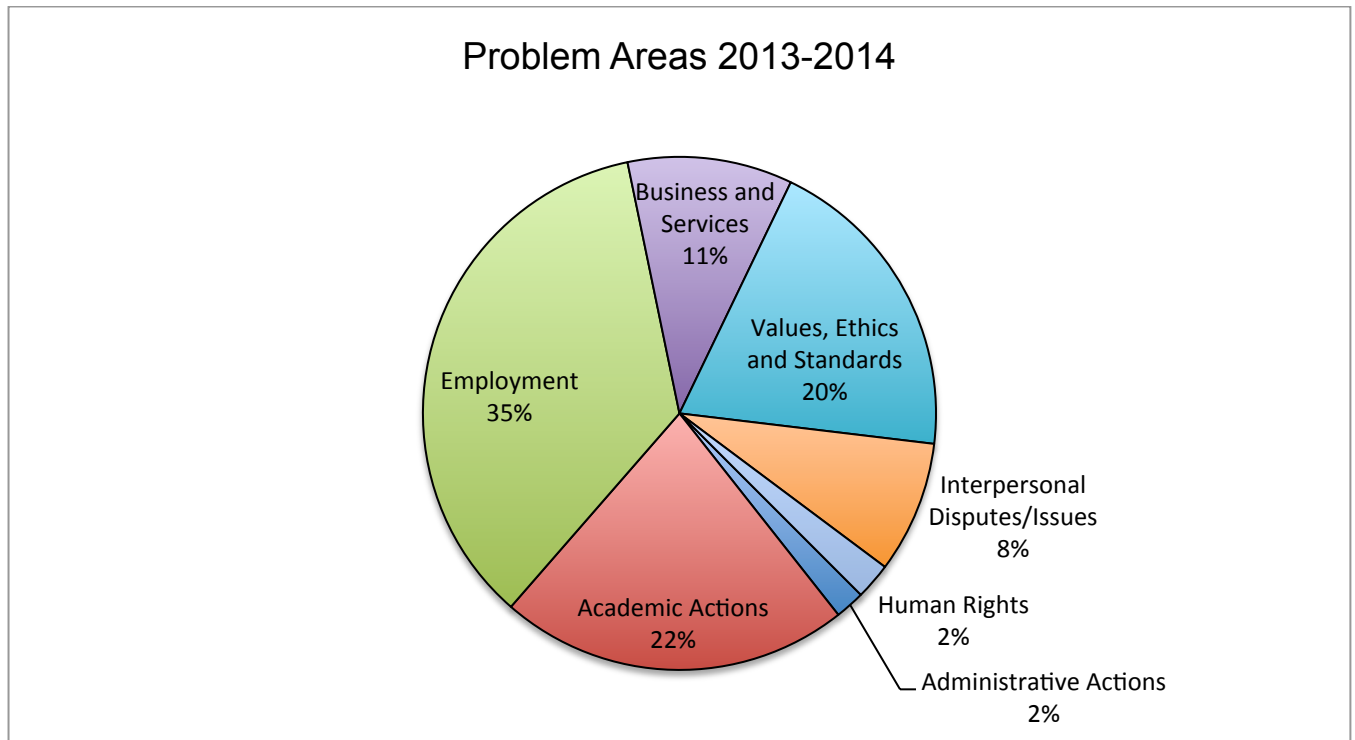
## VII. Problem Area Data

As previously noted, there are seven problem areas:

- Academic Actions
- Administrative Actions
- Business and Services
- Employment
- Human Right
- Interpersonal Disputes/Issues
- Values, Ethics and Standards

Problem Areas in 2013-2014:

Problem Areas	2013-2014
Academic Actions	106
Administrative Actions	9
Business and Services	50
Employment	170
Human Rights	11
Interpersonal Disputes/Issues	40
Values, Ethics and Standards	95



The largest number of visitors seeking ombudsman services continues to be for the Employment Problem Area. This past year 35% of the visitor issues were employment related. Examples of

Employment issues are discipline, supervision, tenure and other problems. This is a long-term trend and it is not surprising given that such a large percentage of visitors are employee constituents.

The second largest number of visitor issues this past year, representing 22% of the visitor issues, were for the Academic Actions Problem Area. Examples of the Academic Actions Problem Areas are advising, graduate committee actions, and grading. The number of visitors with issues in this problem has grown steadily over the past three years.

The number of visitors with issues in the Values, Ethics and Standards Problem Area also continues to be significant, with 20% of issues falling in this area in the past year. Examples of Values, Ethics and Standards issues are ethical issues, conflict of interest, research concerns and other problems. The high volume in Employment, Academic Actions and Values, Ethics and Standards reflects the complexity and seriousness of many visitor concerns.

The other Problem Areas, Administrative Actions, Business and Services, Human Rights, and Interpersonal Disputes, represent a smaller percentage of visitor issues. Nonetheless, these are significant issues for the visitor seeking Ombudsman assistance.

When examining trends in Problem Areas, it is important to recognize that visitors sometimes seek Ombudsman assistance for more than one Problem Area. While the Problem Areas may be inter-related, each Problem Area represents a discrete visitor concern.

### **VIII. Ombudsman Role as Change Agent**

The Ombudsman Office reports on trends and areas of concern throughout the year. We do this by discreetly approaching the relevant party or the person in a position of authority. We provide that person with limited trend information in a non-identifying manner. While confidentiality limits our ability to provide certain information or great detail about the issues, we believe our input is helpful. Indeed, we appreciate the responsiveness with which those in authority hear our feedback and promote positive change.

When we report on trends, the Ombudsman is not pointing out that someone acted inappropriately. Rather, the Ombudsman Office conveys an area of concern to ensure that the institution operates in the optimal way. Indeed, it is a sign of strength that the institution recognizes that it is not perfect and that there is a process available to voice concerns and seek improvements.

### **Thank You**

We thank the Cornell community members who have entrusted us to confidentially meet with them to manage and resolve conflict. It is a privilege to be part of the University's network of caring services. We invite any readers of this report to ask questions and offer comments or ideas.

Office of the University Ombudsman  
Cornell University  
118 Stimson Hall  
Ithaca, New York 14853-7101  
(607) 255-4321  
ombudsman@cornell.edu  
www.ombudsman.cornell.edu