

Ombuds Office Report

FY2022

Authored by: University Ombuds Office Staff



**UNIVERSITY
OMBUDS OFFICE**

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About the Annual Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the reader with an understanding of the engagement of the Ombuds Office with the KU community during the FY2022 time period. Herein we focus primarily on providing perspective on trends and themes within and across our visits with the visitors and groups with whom we met.

Additionally, the report includes:

- An Executive Summary to highlight key observations and trends we have noted this past year.
- Insights into how the Ombuds Office is being used, what services were provided, what types of concerns were presented, and any broader implications beyond those concerns.
- Description of our outreach efforts.
- Feedback from the annual survey sent to the KU community through KU Governance Office at the end of each academic year. The call-out boxes highlighted in red text throughout the report are comments from the survey responses. They provide further perspective on what visitors experience when engaging with the Office.
- Reflections on the year as well as trends and themes of importance as the KU community moves forward and the Ombuds Office's notable priorities for the upcoming academic year.

“...the conversation I had with the Ombuds Office was helpful in identifying potential ways to start to address the issues I brought forth.”

Finally, the report concludes with information about the history, purpose, and current make-up of the University Ombuds Office and its staff.

Executive Summary

The year covering this report was marked by several key observations that are summarized below along with notable accomplishments of the Ombuds team.

Various sections of the full report offer more detailed commentary and reflections on the meaning of those key observations. These observations come from anonymized information gathered over the course of our work in the Ombuds Office, and from the responses from the annual survey sent to the KU Community about their experience and knowledge of the Ombuds Office.

Table 1. Top Issues Across Visitors for the 2020-2021 & 2021-2022 School Years

Primary points from visitor information:	Primary points from feedback survey data:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall number of visitors has increased 15% for a total of 192 visitors, comprising of 254 visits.General consistent use across various KU member groups with notable shifts in the percentages of administrators (manager and above), grad students, and unclassified staff.When given the choice, visitors generally chose <u>not</u> to self-report race/ethnicity (71% did not self-report) and gender identity (57%)"Peer and colleague relationships" was the top category of visitor issues. The prior year's top category was "Evaluative relationships", and it is now second. The other top six issues of visitors remain similar ("Academic matters", "Discrimination and harassment", "Values/Ethics/Standards", "University Policy").	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall satisfaction with the Ombuds Office remains very high and nearly identical to previous years.This year, 1,225 people responded (yes or no) to the initial question, a 48% increase over the 825 who responded to the first question last year. The survey first asks if respondents are familiar with the Ombuds Office: of the 1,225 who responded, 397 said they were familiar. This is an overall increase in the respondents to the survey who were familiar with the Ombuds Office from 312 in the previous year to 397 in Spring 2022, (a 27% increase from last year or 85 people).Significant impact of Ombuds Office was reported in the survey data around "what would you have done <i>without</i> the Ombuds Office?" A large number would have "left KU", a four-fold increase over the percentage responding similarly last year. Similarly, compared to the prior year, survey respondents indicated that they would likely bring their issues up sooner and talk to others about their issues rather than not sharing.

Two important categories of trends are noted here for this year's report:

First, there is the ongoing need for greater coordination, shared goals, vision, and collaboration among various units on campus that support people in conflict. Addressing this can strengthen our collective use of tools and capacity for the informal resolution of an array of conflicts and interpersonal challenges faced by students, staff, and faculty.

Second, there is a growing need to support accommodations across the KU Community for students, employees, and individuals who might have both a student and employee designation. One example of this could be the raising awareness of the support the current services offer and that help individuals navigate and complete the accommodation application process.

Ombuds Office Charter Document Update:

The Ombuds Office team drafted and guided the review process for a major revision to the Ombuds Office Charter document into the Fall of 2022. Last updated in 2008, the charter document was overdue for revisions and realignment with the updated International Ombuds Association Standards of Practice. A draft worked on by the Office's ombuds with General Counsel has been shared and deliberated with University Governance leaders, and with the Provost. The draft is currently in the final steps of review.

FY22 by the Numbers

The year covering this report was marked by an increase in the number of visitors to our Office. Our number of visitors was 192, up from 167¹ visitors the previous year.

Twenty-five additional visitors were seen, a

15% increase. This was the first full year where we kept track of the number of office visits needed to meet those 192 visitors—254. We also made small yet meaningful adjustments to the way we balanced our efforts throughout the year. We now note how our administrative associate was

“I appreciated the opportunity to speak with an unbiased and neutral person regarding my issues at the university.”

¹ Due to some reporting and data management issues with our third-party data management platform a recalculation of the total number of visitors for last year was necessary, lowering the total number seen last year by seven visitors.

able to meet some visitors' needs prior to a visit with an ombuds at the point of initial contact. This was not our practice in the past. The associate ombuds continued to increase their number of visits with visitors, while the management and administrative workload was led by the acting university ombuds. For professional development purposes, our graduate student began sitting in on visits with undergraduates to gain more direct experience and observe the process the ombuds use with visitors.

Who Visited with the Ombuds?

The Ombuds Office sees all members of the KU community, including students, staff, faculty, and occasionally alumni and parents of KU students. In this section we will describe key information about our visitors, while maintaining their anonymity. We continually reflect on and adapt our practices in collecting information and how we share this information from a diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging lens.

KU Membership

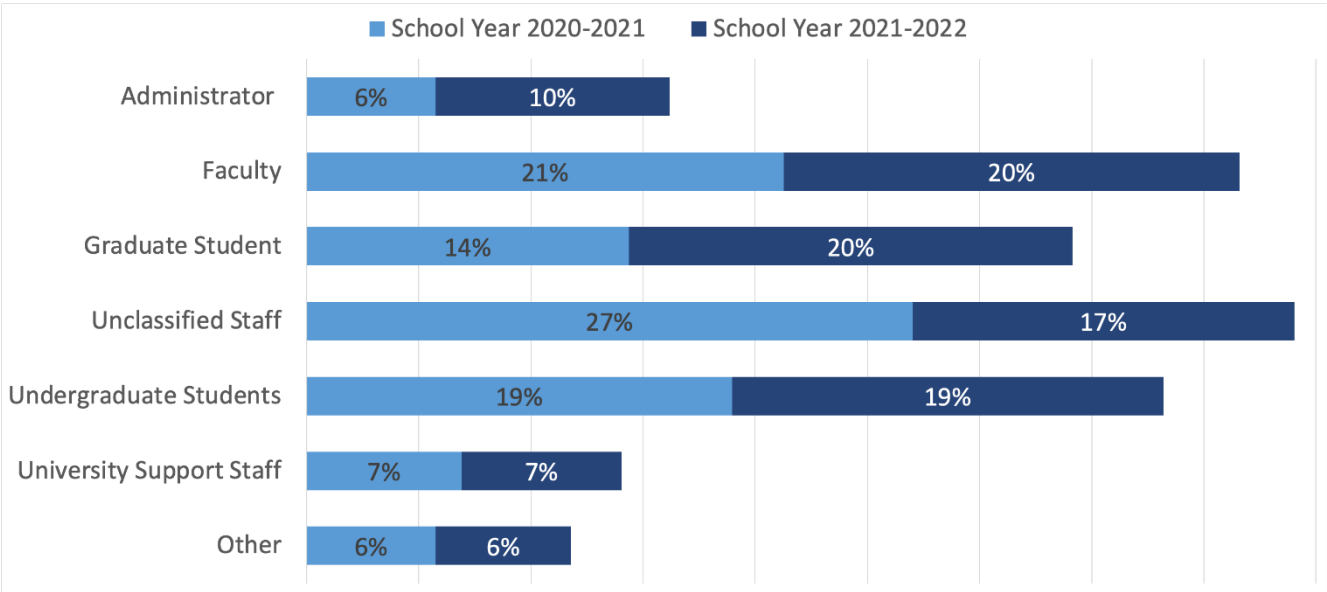
As noted in Chart 1 below, we share the KU membership of those that visited the Ombuds Office, and how those percentages compared with the previous year. The importance of this

“...they were incredibly helpful, great listeners, and had some concrete, useful suggestions that steered us in a productive direction.”

demographic information helps us reflect on who in the community knows about us and of those that know about us, who is having issues that might be supported by the services of the Ombuds Office. Those two factors may at times work against each other, in that those who need us may not know of the services we offer.

This year there was a fairly even spread of visitors who were faculty, graduate students, or undergraduates. Staff, comprising both unclassified professionals and university support staff make up a total of 24% of our visitors this past year, unclassified professional staff making up most of the staff, at 17%. We suspect that our definition of administrator (meaning those who are managers with direct reports, as well as more senior administrators) may be a wider definition than used in the past. Also, some people have multiple memberships and those are recorded. The category “other” is interesting too since those are typically parents, alumni, and sometimes community members who have had some interaction or experience with KU and want to consult the ombuds.

Chart 1. Percent of Visitors by KU Membership ([see a tabular view of Chart 1](#))



Self-reporting of Identity in our Visitors:

This past academic year we made a conscious decision to shift to a self-reporting model for visitors, inviting them to share with us demographics related to their race/ethnicity and gender/gender ethnicity. This is what we noticed—most of our visitors choose not to report race/ethnicity or gender/gender identity information with us either in the confidential input form or in conversation with us during our visit. In brief, just over 20% of our visitors self-reported their racial/ethnic identity, and 43% reported their gender/gender identity.

“I have been skeptical about the need for an Ombuds in an institution where there is HR, [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX], and other resources. Now I fully understand its value. My employee experience is better after having processed a very difficult situation with the Ombuds. I am forever grateful.”

This led us to consider several explanations for this, and possible next steps for the Ombuds Office in how we explain what we are collecting and why it matters.

In the effort to approach this question further we consulted with the Interim Vice Provost of the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging and the Director of the Center for Sexuality and Gender Diversity to gain greater awareness of what might be the barriers for people when choosing to self-report their identities in the process of requesting a visit or during a meeting with us. Among the ideas that

surfaced were offering potential visitors to our office a clearer understanding of what we would be doing with the information in our confidential input form, sharing the reason why we are

collecting this self-reported information, and how the central practice of our office, confidentiality, necessitates that thematic reporting is anonymized.

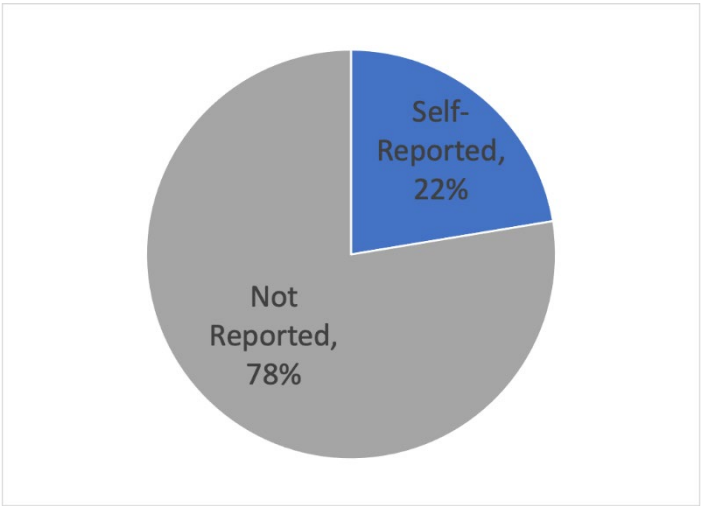
We are rethinking how we invite people to self-report and what options people are given in this self-reporting. We also wonder whether those that chose to self-report do so for a particular reason: they are seeing us for reasons that do or do not relate to their race/ethnicity or gender/gender identity, or as mentioned earlier feel concerned and unsure about what we do with that information.

We are committed to providing a confidential space for visitors of all identities, where they might feel more comfortable in sharing demographic information if they wish to and to updating our own data collection methods.

Self-reporting Identity, by the numbers:

For the demographic category of Race and Ethnicity just over 20% self-report. In Chart 2 below, 78% of visitors chose to not self-report and of those 22% that do self-report their racial or ethnic identity from the selections available were people identifying as white, and then Asian, Black, Native American/Pacific Island, Multi-Racial, and Preferred not to answer in order from largest to smallest. The visitors who choose to self-report their race/ethnicity did so either when filling out our confidential intake form prior to a visit or shared that information during a visit.

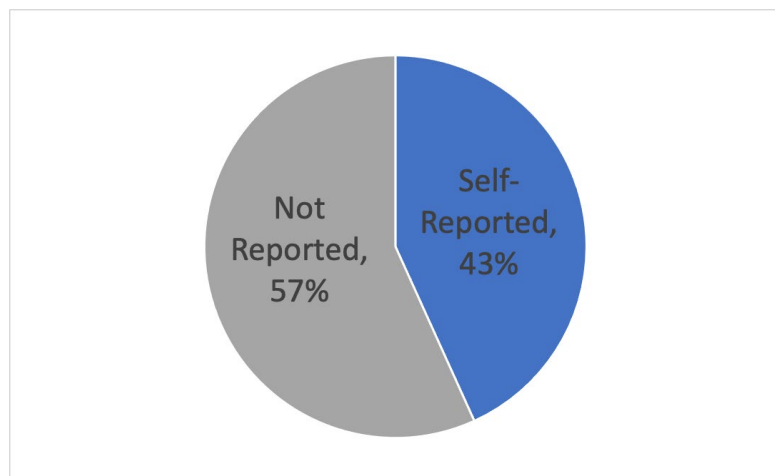
Chart 2. Percent of Visitors by Race and Ethnicity ([see a tabular view of Chart 2](#))



With Gender and Gender Identity reporting, 43% of visitors chose not to self-report and 57% chose to report, (Chart 3, below). With the selections that were provided people who did choose to self-report selected, in alphabetical order, cisgender man, cisgender woman, genderqueer, non-

binary, transgender, as well as those who selected "gender expression not listed here".

Chart 3. Percent of Visitors by Gender and Gender Identity ([see a tabular view of Chart 3](#))



What are People's Concerns?

Nature of the Issue

When people come to visit with the Ombuds Office we also note what the nature of their concerns were. There may be only one, but more often they are facing an intersectionality of issues.

"Providing quick responses when students/staff/faculty reached out. I was helped in less than 48 hours, and it was a time sensitive matter, so it was extremely helpful."

Overall people come to our Office because they have a situation that warrants an "off-the-record" conversation, and they want to feel heard and explore their options. If we were to summarize this year's central issues, we could suggest that people are often in distress with one another, colleagues, supervisors, or professors and that

the interpersonal relationships are critical to their happiness at KU. As we like to say, no one comes to the Ombuds Office when things are going well and when their needs and obligations as a member of the KU community are being met well.

Below, in Table 2., we share the top six categories of issues. Although the top six have not changed from the previous year, their order changed. This year, the number of visitors whose issues centered on a category of issues we call *peer and colleague relationships* and *evaluative relationships* switched places at the top. *Evaluative relationship* issues can include

supervisor/supervisee, student/professor; mentee/mentor, and faculty/chair type relationships. The two top categories in Table 2 are essentially about interpersonal relationships, and together made up a third of the visitors' issues this year. We can speculate about these shifts—wondering whether the shift back to campus or to hybrid working conditions meant that issues between peers and colleagues that may have been stewing came to the surface when they began to share space or settle into new routines again on a more regular basis.

The percentage of concerns that visitors to the Ombuds Office have regarding *discrimination and harassment* together have held steady from last year. However, since the overall number of visitors increased this year, the number of individuals reporting these issues also increased across all categories. This underscores the importance of continually making efforts to develop and support people as they navigate their professional, relational, and interpersonal differences, and disagreements as well as experiences with discrimination and harassment.

Table 2. Top Issues Across Visitors for the 2020-2021 & 2021-2022 School Years

Top Six Issues Across School Years	
2020-2021	2021-2022
1. Evaluative Relationships	1. Peer & Colleague Relationships
2. Peer & Colleague Relationships	2. Evaluative Relationships
3. Academic Matters	3. Academic Matters
4. Discrimination & Harassment	4. Discrimination & Harassment
5. Values, Ethics, Standards & Organizational, Strategic, Mission-Related	5. Values, Ethics, Standards & Organizational, Strategic, Mission-Related
6. University Policy/Appeals	6. University Policy/Appeals

How Did We Engage with the Community?

The Ombuds Office engages with the KU community in a number of ways. Below we describe the various services we most often provide as well as the trainings and workshops we offer to smaller groups or to the larger community in an effort to support stronger relational skills.

Services Provided

In Chart 4 below, the predominant services we provided across our 192 visitors this past year were Conflict Coaching, Resource/Policy/Strategy Guidance, Referral, and Group

Facilitation. In most visits we offer multiple services. In cases when we refer visitors, our review and discussions about other offices/services, as well as policies related to a visitor's issue(s), gives the visitor a greater understanding of the other units/services and policies for themselves and insight into what the process involves if they interact with the next office.

“I thought they were really helpful. Did not get the desired outcome, but at least the [Ombuds] brought the complaint to appropriate people while respecting my confidentiality...”

Chart 4. Distribution of Services Provided with Visitors ([see a tabular view of Chart 4](#))



We also keep track of the number of times we may see a specific visitor for their given circumstance. This past year, 77% of our visitors came for one visit, with 23% seeing us for two or more visits about the issue they are facing. On average we spend approximately 1.5 hours with a visitor-- from a low of a half hour to a more common 1 or 2 hours with a visitor. Seventeen percent of our visitors have met with us before, in previous years or semesters.

Referrals: We recently (Spring 2022) began keeping track of which KU offices/services of which we may make mention or refer visitors to when they see us. These include Faculty Affairs, Governance/Policy, Human Resources, (HR), Reporting/Hotlines; Student/Academic Services; Civil Rights & Title IX Office, Unit/Dept. Administrators, and Other. It is important to note though that as people have complex and intersecting issues, we often discuss the options available from several offices/services. A "referral" per se may be mention of the service/office and how it works in passing, within a longer discussion, and sometimes support in reaching out to that office.

Of the visitors we collected information for in Spring 2022 where we referred or made mention of other offices at KU, 22% of those referrals were to the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX. Another 22% were referred to other offices, most often the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (DEIB), but also included a senior administrator, or other offices that don't fall under the other categories. Nineteen percent were referred to HR and 12% each were referred to Faculty Affairs or Reporting/Hotline services.

Training and Workshops

Another form of engagement is outreach-- our meeting with the KU community where they are. In early Fall 2021 the Ombuds Office made a concerted effort to reach out to an array of different groups on campus who were orienting new staff and students to include us in their programming. During FY2022, we presented to eight different groups, reaching 160 people. We offered information about the Ombuds Office, our services, and our central principles of practice—confidentiality, impartiality, informality, and independence—as well as key topics, such as conflict management tips.

Facilitated Dialogues in Large Groups

This year the Ombuds team worked intensively with several different parts of campus at the request of members of their units. In collaboration with and based on input from a smaller subset of the units' total membership, we designed multi-hour group gatherings on Zoom. These discussions were designed to be preliminary explorations for the group to address its intradepartmental or unit conflict and concerns in ways they had not previously. The size of the groups participating ranged from 15-30 people.

Each was a significant time investment of the Ombuds Office staff and the partners in the units who initially contacted us. The Ombuds Office itself approached these with the intention of

“I greatly appreciated the Ombuds’ readiness to help my department discuss deep-seated... conflict..... Those problems are still festering, but not for lack of trying and professionalism of the Ombuds staff.”

moving the group toward a better understanding of their needs and interests and charting a path forward.

Units with a history of long-standing problems cannot solve all their issues in one meeting when default approaches have failed to resolve the issues in the past. In fact, it takes a

greater investment of time and energy of the leaders, the unit members, and offices like the

Ombuds Office to understand the deeper nature of the issues and present a pathway forward. Our experience reaffirms that the commitment to a process ideally be established up front with all willing participants' voices in the process.

Ombuds Day 2021

The American Bar Association and the International Ombuds Association (IOA) both recognize the second Thursday of October as Ombuds Day. The goals of Ombuds Day according to IOA is to serve "as an additional opportunity to educate and raise awareness among the public about the history and practices of the ombuds profession including the various ombuds models, the roles they play, the services they offer, and the value provided."

On October 14th, 2021, we celebrated the fourth annual Ombuds Day designing events to raise awareness of the services that the Ombuds Office offers and build our collective capacity with our conflict management partners within the KU community. This year, Ombuds Day featured a public conversation with Chuck Howard, the then-Executive Director of the International Ombuds Association. The event was co-sponsored by the KU Ombuds Office and the KU Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging.

Our main event, an in-person panel discussion, provided us with the opportunity to bring a leader in the Ombuds field to our campus to exchange ideas about his experience helping universities shape, develop and maximize their Ombuds Offices. The event was also livestreamed and had 128 registrants. We also arranged a separate meeting with senior administrators, inviting them to a question-and-answer period with Chuck Howard. This was well attended. The Ombuds Office team was able to spend several productive hours with Mr. Howard separately too, consulting on our ombuds practice and a path toward revising our charter document.

Advertising and Outreach

We consistently receive comments in the annual survey to the KU community about the Ombuds Office that we need to spread awareness of our office and services. Each year, we make a variety of shifts in our marketing, outreach, and engagement, to further help the full community recognize the unique space the Ombuds Office offers.

One such effort we made at the suggestion of our graduate assistant, was the placement of posters on the KU bus line. Our graduate student designed and printed posters to be placed on

all 20 bus routes, starting March 4, 2022. Below is a reproduction of the sign.



**Are You in a Difficult Situation
and Unsure What To Do?**

BE HEARD **FEEL EMPOWERED** **EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS** **DECIDE WHAT TO DO**

 **UNIVERSITY OMBUDS OFFICE**
Confidential, Independent, Informal, Impartial

ombuds@ku.edu
785.864.7261



Exp. Date: 12/31/2023

We felt happy to make this leap of advertising to provide an additional way to reach more of the KU community and to reuse this marketing piece at additional events.

Survey Feedback

Each year in the Spring semester, University Governance (now in collaboration with the Provost's Office) sends a survey about the Ombuds Office to all KU students, staff, and faculty. The survey's goal is to understand the degree to which the community knows of the Ombuds Office, knows what the work of the Ombuds Office is, whether the respondents used the Ombuds Office, and if so about their experience with us. We consider it a valuable snapshot and supplement to our own information about visitors and their experience with the Ombuds Office. Importantly, the survey is sent out by email to all KU students, staff, and faculty at the KU Lawrence/Edwards campuses, around 29,000 people.

The survey revisions were led by the Provost's Office this year, in consultation with the University Governance, leading to a shift in the Likert scale questions and rewording of some questions.

If respondents *are* familiar with the Office they are then presented with additional questions, including whether they used the Ombuds Office's services in the past year.

The written comments in the survey serve as an illuminating learning opportunity to hear the voices of those who have visited with us through the following three open-ended questions:

- What the Ombuds could improve on?
- What the Ombuds should continue to do?
- What other comments would you like to share?

We hear pointed, and often poignant responses, from which we learn each year. The red highlighted text in the call out boxes are quotes from a few respondents' survey comments.

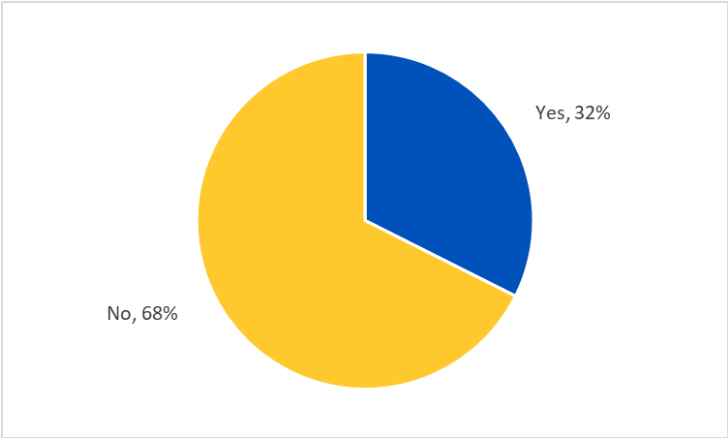
Survey Feedback by the Numbers:

This year, 1,225 people responded (yes or no) to the initial question, a 48% increase over the 825 who responded year. The initial questions asks if respondents are familiar with the Ombuds Office. Of those who responded, 397 said they *were* familiar. This is an overall increase in the respondents to the survey who were familiar with the Ombuds Office from 312 in the previous year to 397 in Spring 2022, (a 27% increase from last year or 85 people). The survey then goes on to include 25 questions in total and three opportunities for survey respondents to add additional comments in open text fields, as described above.

The number of respondents in the final group who have used our services in the past year is always the smallest and it is that group (this year 58, the previous year 54) that constitutes the bulk of the survey data and feedback. (Note that we reported to have seen 192 visitors this past academic year, a 15% increase from 167).

The Chart 5 below, shows how respondents answered the first question: if they were familiar with the Ombuds Office. Although the percentage of those respondents who were familiar with the Ombuds Office was slightly lower than the previous year, at 32%, the overall number of people responding that they were aware of the Ombuds Office increased.

Chart 5. Total percent familiar with the Ombuds Office ([see a tabular view of Chart 5](#))



In Chart 6 below, we share the raw numbers of respondents over the past two years, whether they were familiar with the Ombuds Office, and whether they had contact with the Ombuds Office that school year. We see that the number of initial respondents and the number of those respondents who were familiar with the Ombuds Office has increased, even in the latter part of the pandemic years. We note also that survey respondents that had contact with us also went up.

Chart 6. Raw numbers, responses, familiarity, and contacts 2021 and 2022 ([see a tabular view of Chart 6](#))

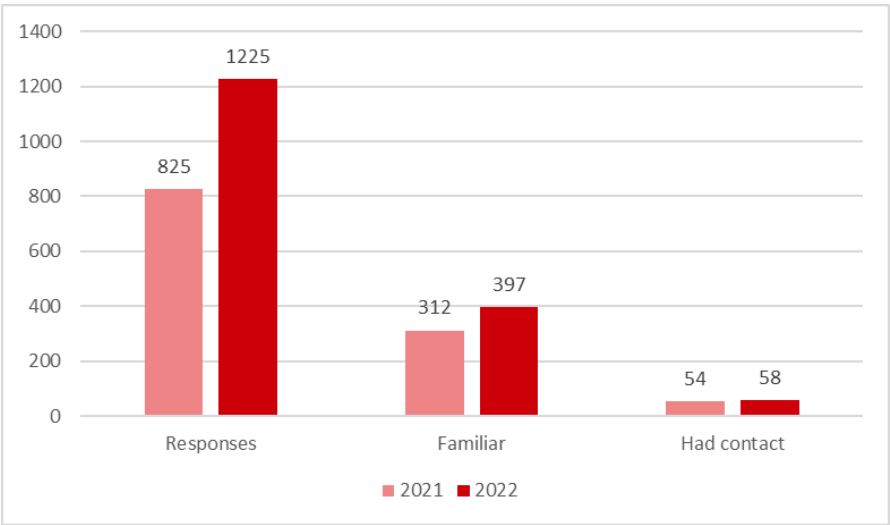


Chart 7 identifies the percentage of respondents from each KU community group who were familiar of the office. We see that those identifying as administrators are the largest group. This is important, as we need to work with them to improve processes and support staff, faculty, and students. It also signals who we need to do further outreach with. The smallest percentage of those with familiarity are undergraduates. They also make up the largest group of the KU

Community and provided the most survey responses, even if to answer that they are not familiar with the Ombuds Office. This year we note that more university support staff survey respondents are familiar with us than in previous years. The category of “Other” combines several additional categories with very small numbers, and includes respondents who identified themselves as alumni, post-doc research staff, and parents of students.

Chart 7. Percentage of community members who were familiar with the Ombuds Office. ([see a tabular view of Chart 7](#)) **Ch7**

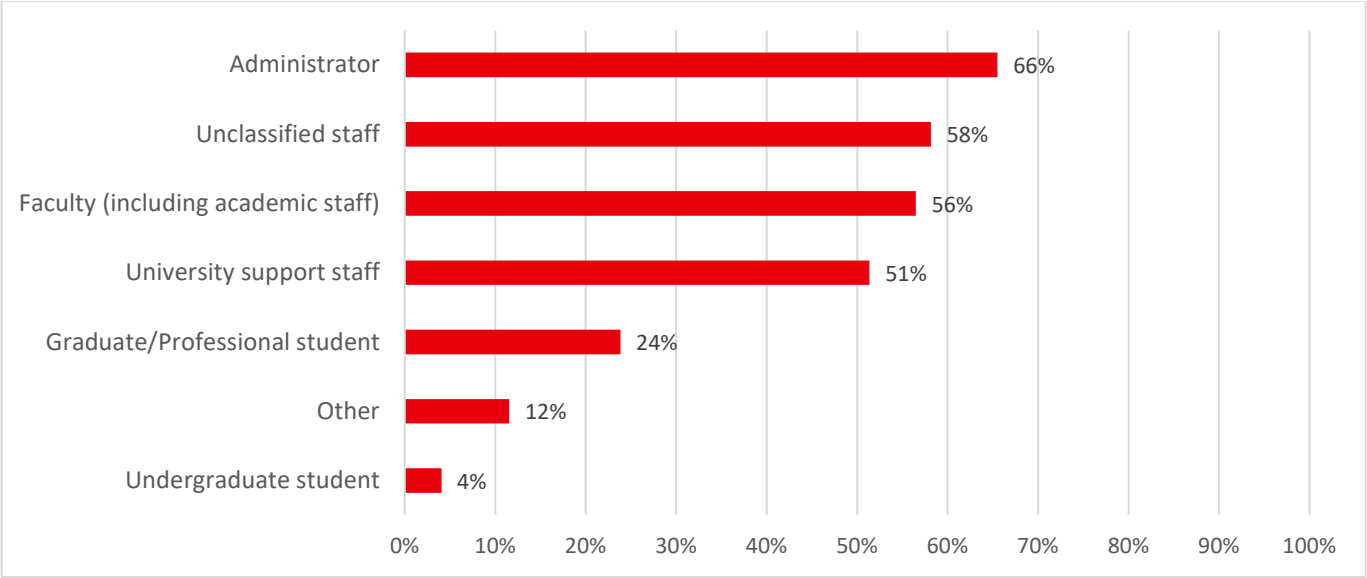


Chart 8 below shows how survey respondents who said they had contact with us found out about the office. We note an increase in the percentage who found us via the Internet and decrease in the percentage of those that found us via an Ombuds presentation. This makes sense since we passed another year in the pandemic where the number of presentations we offered was reduced, and the types of trainings the Ombuds Office had done in the past were taken on by other HR units (e.g., partnering with Human Resources for Compassionate Communication trainings).

Chart 8. How people found out about the Ombuds Office ([see a tabular view of Chart 8](#))

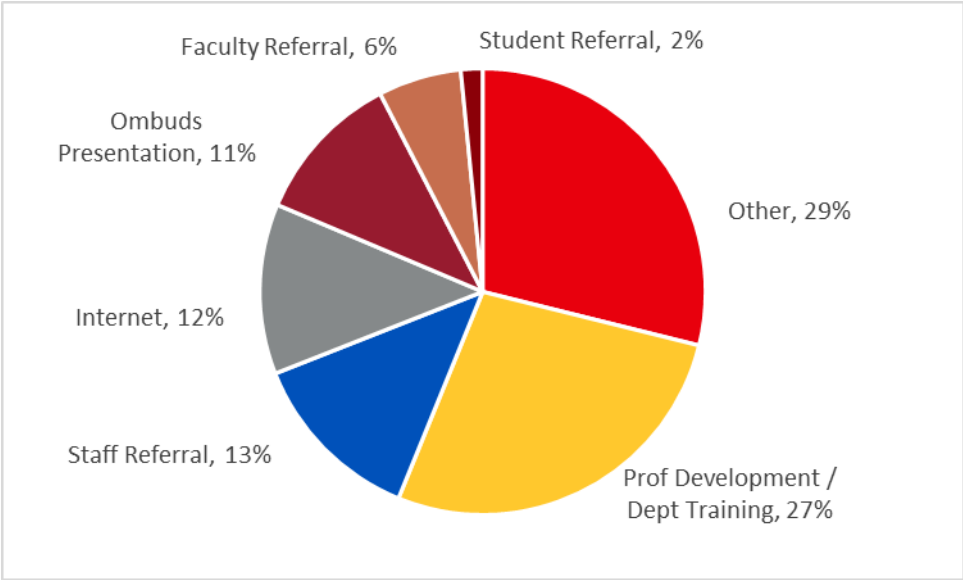
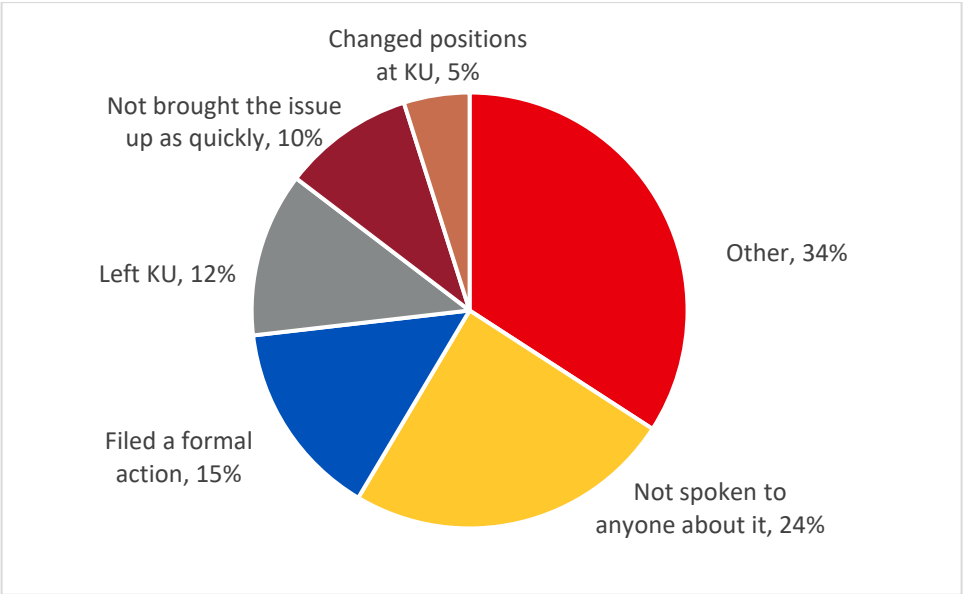


Chart 9, below, offers a notable change that has occurred this year about what people would have done if they had not met with the Ombuds Office. In brief, the survey responses indicate that visitors to the Ombuds Office are bringing their issues up more quickly and talking about them (rather than not sharing the fact that they are struggling with others) and that using the Ombuds Office forestalled their leaving KU.

Chart 9. What People Would Have Done without the Ombuds Office ([see a tabular view of Chart 9](#))



Doing without the Ombuds Office, by the Numbers:

Last year, 50% of the survey respondents (who had met with the Ombuds Office in that year) said that without the Ombuds Office they would have *Not Brought the Issue Up as Quickly* (15%) or *Not Spoken to Anyone About it*, (35%). This year 34% of survey respondents indicated that without the Ombuds Office they would have not brought the issue up as quickly (10%) or would not have spoken to anyone about it, (24%).

This percentage decrease from 50% to 34% has us wondering if people could be feeling empowered to find someone to talk to, and/or to bring their issues forward. This signals that people may have greater awareness about where to go, feel better prepared to address their

“If I had not had the help of [the Ombuds], I was planning to investigate my options through a lawyer.”

issues (so often found in evaluative or peer relationships), or the issues are serious enough that they use their agency to find support.

To the latter point, the Ombuds Office can be viewed as part of a network of units across KU that build this capacity in others and helps them as they find the right kind of support and ways forward.

Another observation from this year's response to the same question included a marked increase in the number of respondents to this question who said that without the Ombuds Office they would have *Left KU*. Last year 3% of respondents said this. This year 12% responded that without the Ombuds Office they would have left KU. This is an important shift. It indicates that their contact with the Ombuds Office forestalled their leaving KU or, at minimum, shifted their belief that leaving was their only option in favor of other strategies to meet their need.

The cost to KU of people leaving their positions is not insignificant.² We see this as promising—that people are feeling more empowered or under enough pressure to find someone else to speak to about their issues and report that without the Ombuds Office they would have left KU. When people come forward, whether informally to the Ombuds Office, or formally through various formal processes or channels there is likelihood that they will understand their options and be supported to navigate those challenges.

In Chart 10 below, the survey asks the respondents about their level of satisfaction with the service they received from the Ombuds Office. A Likert scale was used, asking respondents to

² See, <https://hrshrm.shrm.org/blog/2017/10/essential-elements-employee-retention> from the Society for Human Resource Management, for research data on this.

specify their level of agreement or disagreement with nine statements. The scale was increased this year from five to seven points, so there was greater nuance. Although the percentages of those who agree or strongly agree (94%) and disagree/strongly disagree (6%) are the same as the previous year, we had a larger response rate, 55 said they agree or strongly agree. This level of satisfaction with the Ombuds Office is important.

Chart 10. Percent satisfied by service received from the Ombuds Office ([see a tabular view of Chart 10](#))

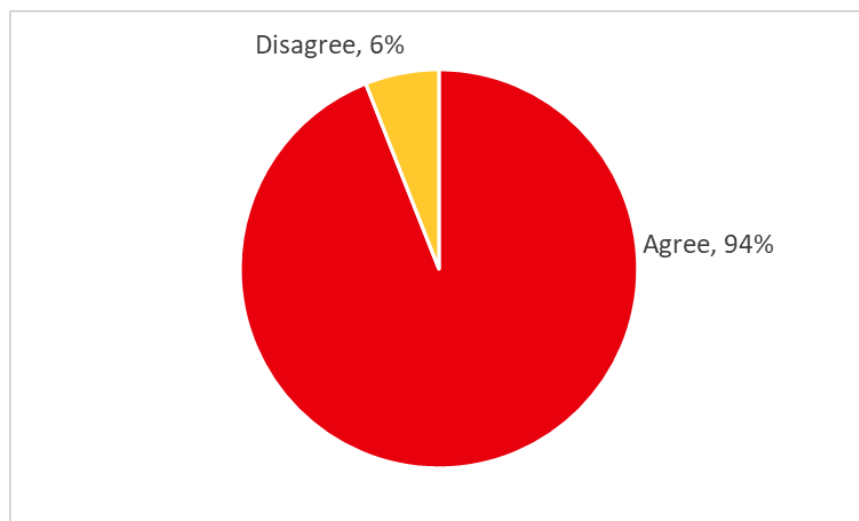


Chart 10 was created by correlating and aggregating the responses to the following questions:

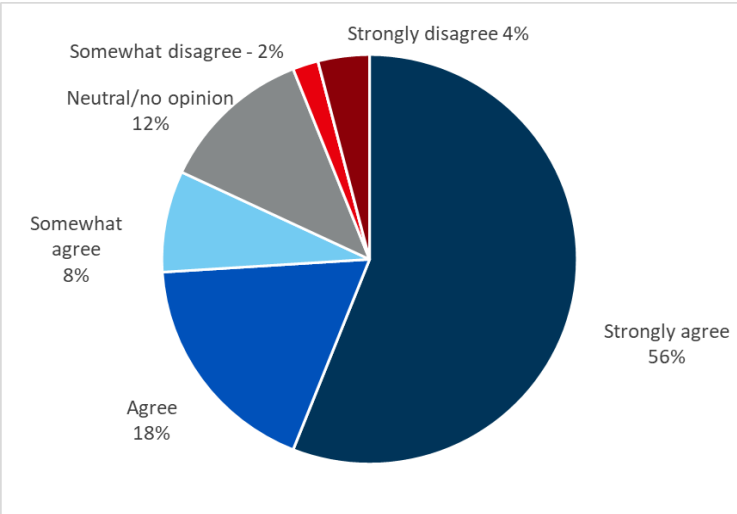
- It was easy to contact the Ombuds Office and schedule an appointment
- I was able to meet with the Ombuds in a reasonable amount of time
- The Ombuds listened to my individual needs and concerns
- The Ombuds treated me with fairness
- The Ombuds treated me respectfully
- The Ombuds treated me without prejudice or bias
- The Ombuds respected my confidentiality and asked for my permission before speaking with others

Among those that took the survey and have used the Ombuds Office services, an overwhelming percentage are satisfied. Focusing on this large number gives us ongoing confidence that our work is meeting the direct needs of the KU community with whom we engage and aligns with the standards of practice of the International Ombuds Association, (IOA).

In Chart 11 below, we see the range of survey respondents (who were familiar with the Ombuds Office (n=58)) and who indicated they would or would not use the Ombuds Office services again.

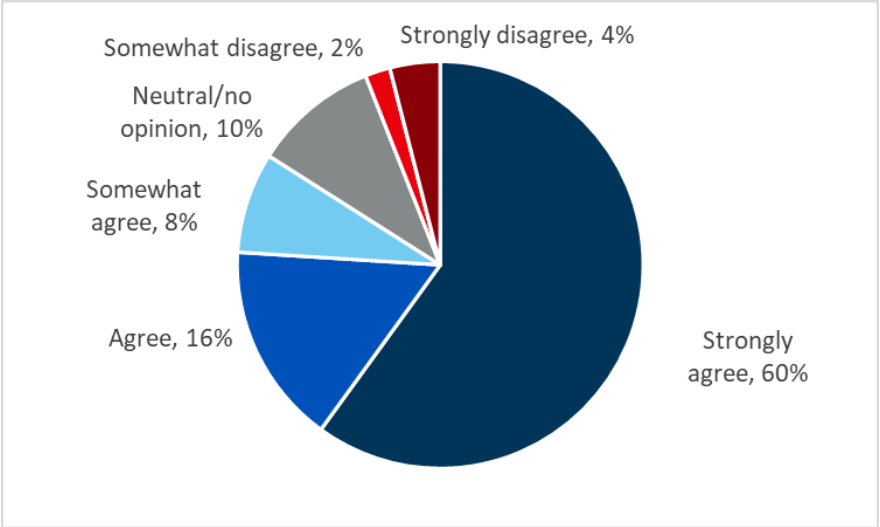
We see that 84% strongly agreed or agreed or somewhat agreed that they would use the Ombuds Office services again. This year is a slight increase over the previous year, and with a more nuanced set of choices for respondents.

Chart 11. Percentage Who Would see the Ombuds Again ([see a tabular view of Chart 11](#))



In Chart 12 below, we see responses to the question of whether they would refer others to the Ombuds Office: 82% of those said they would refer others to our Office. Again, a slight increase from the previous year. We suspect that the high percentage of satisfaction among those that used our services and the slightly lower percentage of those who would use our services again, or refer others to our services, might be explained by the fact that they come to learn, through conversation with the ombuds, what other services, formal and informal are available for them during their time at KU. With that new knowledge they may feel that they do not need to use the Ombuds Office again or know how to direct others to services.

Chart 12. Percentage Who Would Refer others to the Ombuds ([see a tabular view of Chart 12](#))



And finally, the words of a few additional survey respondents who added comments in the Survey regarding what the Ombuds Office should keep doing:

- "Reflective listening and following up"
- "Providing assistance to help students organize their concerns"
- "Working to resolve conflict in a mutually agreeable way"
- "Listening to problems without judgment and validating emotions"
- "Be a truly unbiased option on campus"
- "Actively listening, expressing empathy, connecting people to the help they require"

Final Reflections & Priorities for FY23

Navigating Change

The staff of the Ombuds Office have, along with our peers across campus, attempted to navigate the pandemic challenges and effects with agility and safety to each other and visitors to the Ombuds Office. The entire period covered by this report was under the pandemic conditions, and that included staff changes. We are proud of our collective efforts, our collective learning, and leaning into the changes to continue to offer the campus community a safe space to have off-the-record, confidential conversations, explore their situations informally, and consider their options. Visitors now have an option for in-person or Zoom meetings, which provides additional flexibility and comfort for their schedules and work/life situations.

"Keep [the Ombuds]. [The Ombuds] is fantastic, ethical, and fulfills the role in an excellent way. The speed of scheduling was also impressive and appreciated"

During this time we strived to provide regular, timely, and supportive organizational feedback to administrators of various units, in our effort to be advocates for fair processes. The (then) acting university ombuds set up bimonthly meetings for the ombuds to

meet and deliberate with key senior administrative leaders whose work and areas overlap with issues we see. We do this to enhance institutional learning and reflection.

Still, there is a growing need for visitors to engage with additional conflict management system resources that are collaborating together. The Ombuds Office can support this growing need. It will necessitate cross-system collaboration and coordination to support unit-level change and conflict resolution, and the strengthening of our partnerships with more collaborators around campus who work informally or formally in the conflict management system at KU. Some of those offices include, Human Resources, Office of Civil Rights & Title XI, Diversity Equity, Inclusion

“My experience [with the Ombuds] was awesome, and I would use the services again or recommend them to a colleague.”

& Belonging, Faculty Development, Student Affairs, Academic Success, Graduate Studies, Law School's Mediation Clinic and others.

Collaborations may include co-sponsoring or co-planning workshops and trainings, and the inclusion of restorative practices into formal processes. Such collaborative efforts may also include the development of non-punitive and non-

retributive responses to harm. Responses that are restorative and transformative can complement or supplement other formal processes in place. The Ombuds Office is poised to be a partner in the design and implementation of such programs.

Priorities

By the time this report is completed, the semester is already underway, and we are close to the end of the first quarter of the new fiscal year. We have a better idea how to imagine and shape the Ombuds Office's priorities for the remainder of this academic year. Below we list our intentions:

1. Complete the revisions and endorsement of the Ombuds Office's new Charter document;
2. Grow our outreach program so that more undergraduates, graduate students, and staff know of our services and utilize them when needed. That outreach will include engagement with KU community members from marginalized identities.
3. Adapt our strategies to ensure understanding of who is using our Office, and how we efficiently manage the information about those visitors, while maintaining confidentiality.
4. Explore the possibility of hiring a second full-time associate ombuds
5. Work as a thought-partner with other units on campus and campus leaders on shaping the next generation of informal resolution processes, strengthening, and widening the reach of those that currently exist on campus.

Office Overview

What the Ombuds Office does

The ethical foundations of the Ombuds work offered in service to the campus community are Confidentiality, Independence, Impartiality, and Informality. The Ombuds Office works hard to embody these principles, which are outlined in the Standards of Practice established by the International Ombuds Association. We welcome ALL members of the KU community to bring their concerns to the Ombuds Office, which is defined as anything troubling them that inhibits their capacity to be engaged, happy, healthy, or successful in their work or studies at KU.

We help visitors assess these concerns and consider their options and strategies to bring relief and/or resolution. In doing so, we do not determine the legitimacy of said concerns. Rather, we assist the visitor to define or refine the resolution/strategy that is wanted and plan a pathway forward. For us, our work with a visitor is most effective only when those aspects are attained. The related successes for visitors are defined as:

- repaired relationships,
- clearer insights into their own needs and hopes,
- greater sense of empowerment and agency,
- options clarified, examined, and illuminated,
- improved working/studying conditions,
- changed procedures/policies, and a
- greater understanding of KU's operation and how that affects the visitor's work and/or studies.

About the Ombuds Office

University of Kansas Ombuds Office was established in 1977 as a response to campus concerns that began during the mid-1960's, related to the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and women's issues. The administration and University Senate agreed that establishing an ombuds office would assist in a more open environment conducive to better communication between constituents and in serving the needs and interests of the campus community.

The word, "Ombudsman," is Swedish in origin and means "representative" or "a person who has an ear to the people". In 2007, the name of the office at KU changed from "Ombudsman," to

"Ombuds Office" and the titles of the persons serving in the role changed to "Ombuds" to reflect a gender-neutrality. Much like the title, the office itself has grown and evolved over the years. In Table 3, below, we outline the staff who have occupied the various positions that make up the Ombuds Office team.

Table 3. The Ombuds Office team from December 15th 2020 to June 30th 2022:

	December 15, 2020 -December 31, 2021		January 1, 2022 to June 30th, 2022		
Roles	Team Member	FTE	Team Member	FTE	Notes
University Ombuds	Ada Emmett (Acting)	.80	Ada Emmett	1.0	Permanent university ombuds search concluded in August 2022. Ada Emmett was named university ombuds
Faculty Ombuds	Open	-	Open	-	
Associate Ombuds	Mike Rozinsky	.25	Mike Rozinsky	.25	Mike works remotely.
Admin Associate Sr.	Ellen Slikker	.25	Ellen Slikker	.25	Ellen joined the Ombuds Office team in a part-time role officially in August 2021
Graduate Assistant	Jongjun "JJ" Jeon	.5	Jongjun Jeon	.5	JJ joined the Ombuds Office team in January 2020
	Total	1.80		2.0	

This report was prepared by the committed staff of the Ombuds Office as a team effort, September 2022

Appendix – Tabular View of Charts within the Report

Table View of Chart 1: Percentage of Visitors by KU Membership (see Chart 1)

<i>Percentage of Visitors by KU Membership</i>	Unclassified Staff	Faculty	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	University Support Staff	Administrators	Other
School Year 2020-2021	27%	21%	19%	14%	7%	6%	6%
School Year 2021-2022	17%	20%	19%	20%	7%	10%	6%

Table View of Chart 2: Percentage of Visitors by Race and Ethnicity

	Chose not to self-identify	Self-reported
Percentage of Visitors by Race and Ethnicity	78%	22%

Table View of Chart 3: Percentage of Visitors by Gender Identity

	Chose not to self-identify	Self-reported
Percentage of Visitors by Gender Identity	57%	43%

Table View of Chart 4: Distribution of Services Provided with Visitors

	Conflict Coaching	Resource/Policy/Strategic Guidance	Referred to another Office	Facilitation & Mediation
Percentage of Distribution of Service Provided with Visitors	31%	26%	26%	7%

Table View of Chart 5: Percentage familiar with the Ombuds Office

	Yes	No
Percentage Familiar with the Ombuds Office	32%	68%

Table View of Chart 6: Raw numbers, responses, familiarity, and contacts 2021 and 2022 (see chart 6)

	Responses	Familiar	Had contact
2021	825	312	54
2022	1225	397	58

Table View of Chart 7: Percentage of Community Members who were familiar with the Ombuds Office

	Administrator	Unclassified Staff	Faculty	University Support Staff	Graduate/ Professional Students	Other	Undergraduate Students
Percentage of KU members who were familiar with the Ombuds Office	66%	58%	56%	51%	24%	12%	4%

Table View of Chart 8: How People Found Out about the Ombuds Office

	Professional Development/ Departmental Training	Others	Staff Referral	Internet	Ombuds Presentation	Faculty Referral	Student Referral
Percentage of How People Found Out about the Ombuds Office	27%	29%	13%	12%	11%	6%	2%

Table View of Chart 9: What People Would Have Done without the Ombuds Office

	Other	Not spoken to anyone about it	Filed a formal action	Left KU	Not brought the issue up as quickly	Changed positions at KU
Percentage of what People Would Have Done without the Ombuds Office	34%	24%	15%	12%	10%	5%

Table View of Chart 10: Percentage Satisfied by Service Received from the Ombuds Office

	Agree	Disagree
Percentage satisfied by service received from the Ombuds Office	94%	6%

Table View of Chart 11: Percentage Who would see the Ombuds Again

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Percentage who would see the Ombuds again or refer others	56%	18%	8%	12%	2%	4%

Table View of Chart 12: Percentage Who Refer Others

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral/No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Percentage who would see the Ombuds again or refer others	60%	16%	8%	10%	2%	4%