

# UNLV Ombuds Office

Quarterly Summary of Activities:

January 1, 2022 to March 31, 2022

# Introduction

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It has been my pleasure to lead the Ombuds Office at UNLV since its reintroduction on June 1, 2021. Since then, along with Ombuds Office Admin Tifara Rachal, I have worked with hundreds of members of the UNLV community, individually and in groups, helping them resolve concerns informally and promoting the value of conflict resolution.

In summary, the office performs four primary functions: its staff are present to *listen* to members of the university committee who have concerns; it can *educate* visitors to the office about their options in a specific situation and help groups develop conflict resolution strategies; to offer *mediation* and facilitation services; and to *advocate* for systemic change when warranted. The [Ombuds Office website](#) has a complete list of the services and programs it offers; these range from informational sessions about the office itself to one-on-one conflict coaching to interactive workshops—in person or online—that promote productive conflict resolution.

UNLV's Ombuds Office is operated in accordance with the [International Ombuds Association's Code of Ethics](#) and [Standards of Practice](#). This entails embodying the fundamental principles of *independence* in structure and function; *impartiality*; *informality*, in not participating in any disciplinary or legal processes; and *confidentiality*.

When an office operates, as the Ombuds by definition must, within a cloak of confidentiality, there may be questions about just what goes on there and whether it is fulfilling its stated functions. I believe that, in accordance with ombuds professional best practices, the regular release of information on the office's work that safeguards the confidentiality of those who use it, is the best avenue for accountability. The [Ombuds Office Annual Report 2022](#), which presents information about the office's operations throughout calendar 2021, was well-received on campus. This present report, summarizing the office's work over the first quarter of 2022, has been made available via the Ombuds Office website and provided to the Ombuds Advisory Panel and UNLV's leadership for their review.

It is my hope that this report will answer questions that you have about how the Ombuds Office serves campus. If you have any questions about what the office can do for you, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

*David G. Schwartz*

David G. Schwartz, Ph.D.

Ombuds

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

# Overview

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The Ombuds Office was extremely active in the first quarter of 2022, with appreciatively higher levels of individual visits than in 2021. Group presentations, workshops, and facilitated conversations were similarly robust.

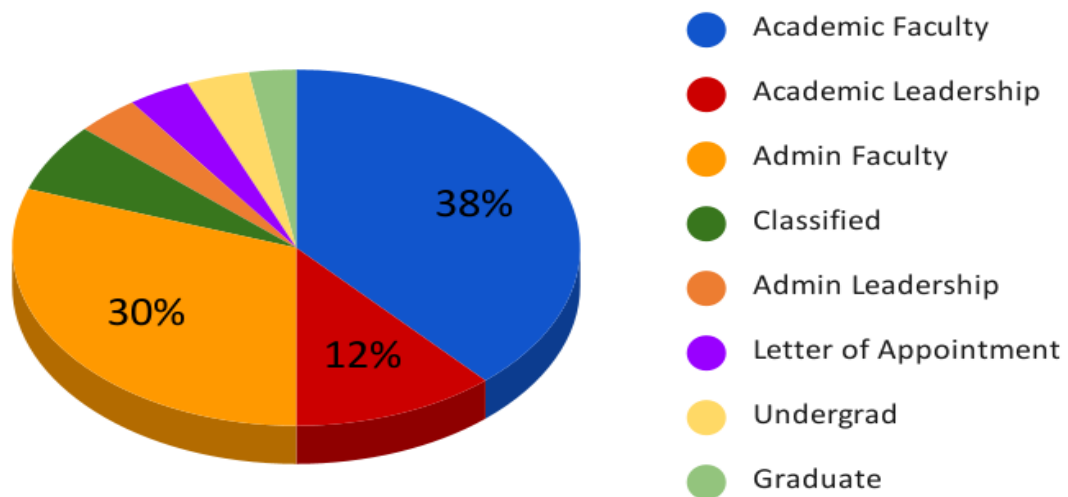
## Visitors and Contacts

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In this report, a visitor is defined as someone who utilizes the Ombuds Office for individual services, including one-on-one meetings, whether in person, by telephone, or remotely. Those attending a workshop or other “public” event are not counted as visitors. Unique visitors are tabulated on a quarterly basis. The office saw 112 unique visitors throughout this quarter. The visitors were divided among the office’s constituent groups as follows:

- 38 percent Academic Faculty
- 12 percent Academic Leadership (chairs, deans)
- 30 percent Administrative Faculty
- 6 percent Classified Staff
- 4 percent Administrative Leadership (directors, vice presidents)
- 4 percent Letter of Appointment
- 4 percent Undergrad
- 3 percent Graduate

### Unique Visitors

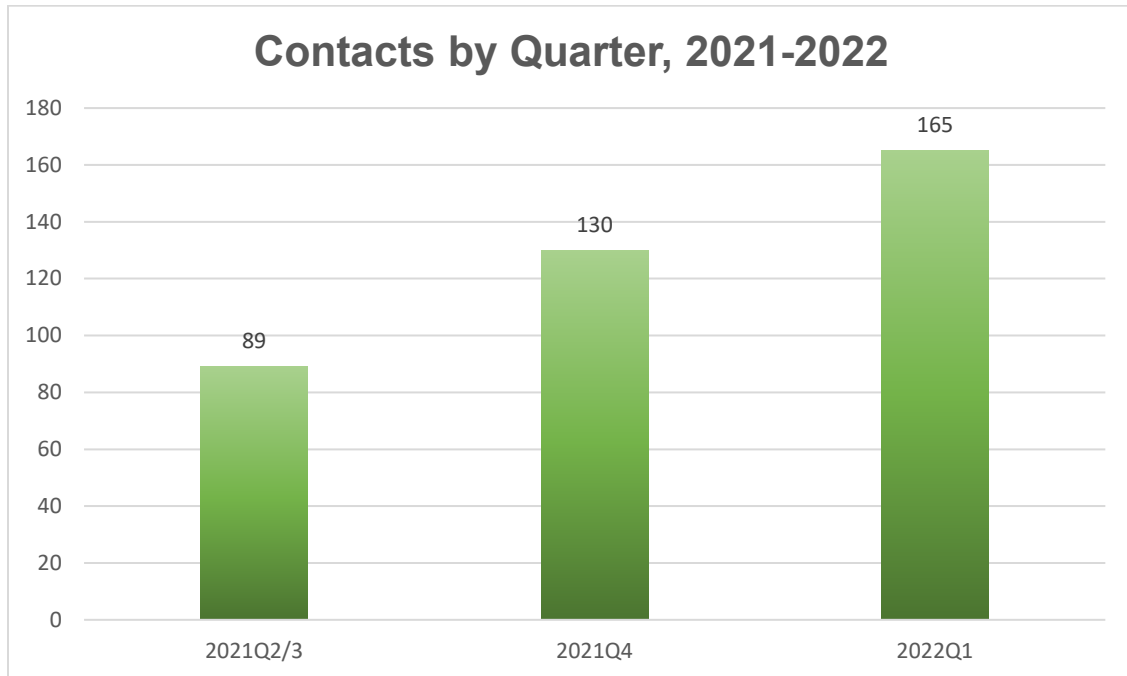
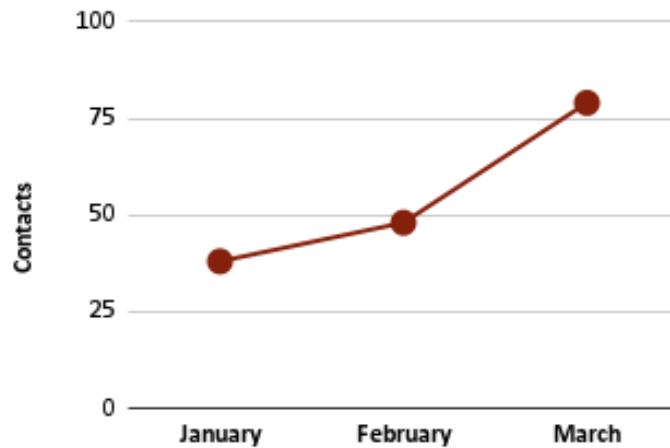


For the purposes of tracking, the office counts any meeting or interaction, whether in-person or remote, with a visitor as a “contact.” One visitor may have multiple contacts with the office.

Between January 1 and March 30 of 2022, the office had 165 contacts.

As illustrated in the chart below, the number of contacts has increased steadily as the year has progressed. The average number of contacts per month, 55, is far outpacing the fourth quarter of 2021, when the average was approximately 42.

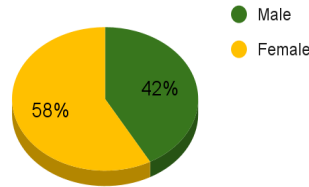
**Contacts by Month - First Quarter 2022**



# Office Visitors: Demographics

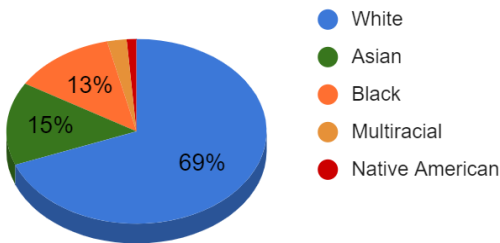
Visitors to the office primarily identified as female, making up 58 percent of visitors; those identified as male accounted for 42 percent.

Gender Demographics

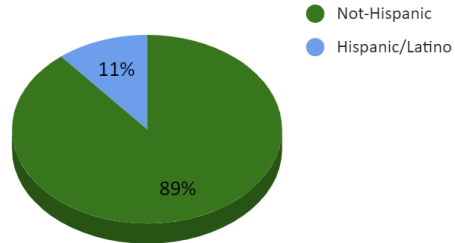


The population of visitors primarily identified as White made up 69 percent, with the second highest demographic being Asian at 15 percent, followed by 13 percent Black, 2 percent multiracial and 1 percent Native American. 11 percent of visitors identified as being Hispanic or Latino.

Racial Demographics



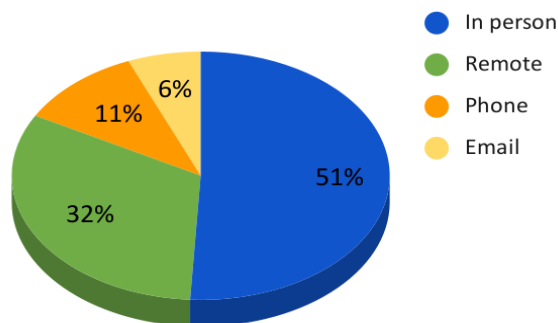
Hispanic/Latino



# Visitation Modes

Visitors have chosen mostly to visit the office in person, with 51 percent doing so, followed by 32 percent virtual, and 11 percent choosing to reach out via telephone. Email, which is generally discouraged, was utilized for 6 percent of interactions.

Visitation Modes



# Top Concerns by Category

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For reporting purposes (including this quarterly report), the Ombuds tracks concerns brought to his attention. These records are kept in such a way that no individually identifiable information is associated with any record. Further, these records are never released except in the aggregate.

Following International Ombuds Association best practices, the Ombuds logs those concerns using the IOA's Uniform Reporting Categories, which classify common issues brought to ombuds offices into nine general divisions:

1. Compensation & Benefits
2. Evaluative Relationships
3. Peer and Colleague Relationships
4. Career Progression and Development
5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance
6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment
7. Services/Administrative Issues
8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related
9. Values, Ethics, and Standards

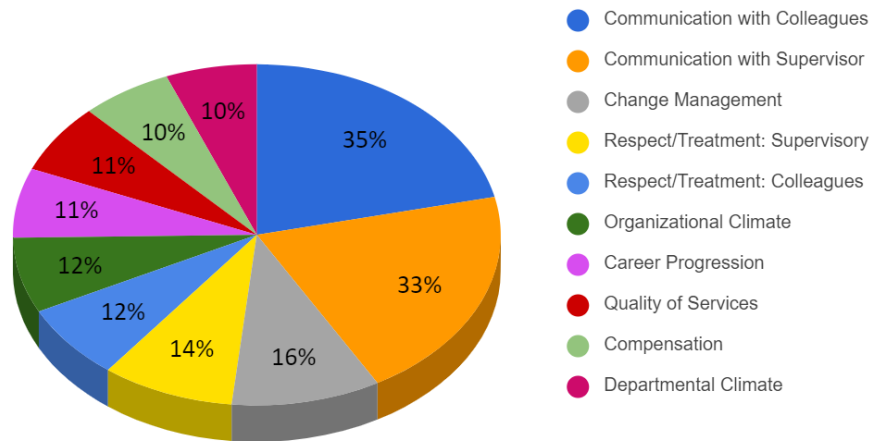
Within those divisions, concerns are further sorted into dozens of discrete classifications. For example, an issue relating to an employee's benefits is classified as 1.c; a concern about retaliation against an employee by their supervisor is 2.h; bullying or mobbing by peers is 3.f; an issue related to reappointment, tenure, or promotion is 4.e.

One visitor may report multiple concerns, in which case multiple category codes are recorded.

Throughout the first quarter of 2022, the most common reported issue was communication between colleagues; this concern made up 35 percent of cases. Communication issues with a supervisor made up 33 percent, making this the second most significant issue reported. 16 percent of visitors reported issues with change management, 14 percent reported concerns with respect from supervisors, and 12 percent reported the similar issue with colleagues. Other top reported categories were concerns with organizational climate, career progression, issues quality of services, compensation, and departmental climate.

In general, this tracks with information received by other offices on campus and climate survey data. As communication continues to be a major concern, the Ombuds Office has created workshops dealing with communication issues in an effort to improve the campus climate around communication.

## Top 10 Reported Categories



Visitors also continue to express their desire to receive fair compensation and performance appraisals, to receive helpful feedback from supervisors, to be able to appropriately participate in strategic decision-making, and to work on rebuilding trust in their departments.

## Working with Groups: Facilitated Discussions

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As a part of its services to the university community, the Ombuds Office offers facilitative group conflict resolution. A facilitated conversation led by the Ombuds is an ideal tool for units grappling with everything from discrete initiatives to major operational and existential challenges. After meeting one-on-one with unit members and their leadership, the Ombuds then schedules a two hour group discussion to talk about the main issues identified through confidential surveys collected by the office. The unit comes up with potential solutions in a confidential, judgment-free setting. While the Ombuds Office and its staff are there to facilitate the process, solutions and next steps are determined solely by the participants.

## Workshops and Presentations

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During the first quarter the Ombuds Office was invited to 10 units to discuss the role of the office and how it serves the university's employees. The brief introductory presentation explains the role of the Ombuds, standards of practice, and an overview of the types of interactive workshops and guided group sessions offered by the Ombuds Office to the UNLV community.

The office also partnered with other university departments to hold workshops on *Difficult Conversations: Making Them Less Painful and More Productive* and *Understanding Conflict Drivers: Different Causes, Common Dynamics*. The office continues to promote these and other interactive

sessions, and plans to host at least one session per month at the Faculty Center in Fall 2022. A full list of programs is available on our [website](#).

## In Closing

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The Ombuds Office exists to serve UNLV by providing an informal channel for conflict resolution and strives to increase collegiality, happiness, and satisfaction on campus.

Some of our work, like workshops and presentations, is highly visible. But much of what we do happens in private, under the cloak of confidentiality. In presenting this report, we hope to demonstrate the scale and impact of the “quiet work” done by the office as its staff help individuals and groups work through interpersonal concerns and procedural issues.

The Ombuds Office continues to develop ways to serve the UNLV community, through individual consultations, group work, and online resources. If you have any questions, or are interested in having the Ombuds work with you to develop a workshop, facilitated discussion, or other program for your unit, please contact us at [ombuds@unlv.edu](mailto:ombuds@unlv.edu).

For more information about Ombuds Office programs and services, please visit the [Ombuds Office website](#).