



Ombuds Office
Quarterly Summary of Activities

July 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024

Introduction

This report summarizes the activities of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Ombuds Office in the third quarter of calendar year 2024.

The office's primary functions are to listen to concerns, educate on options and conflict resolution, provide mediation and facilitation services, and advocate for systemic change when needed. 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 operates in accordance with the [International Ombuds Association](#) (IOA) [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*.

My intention with this report is to increase awareness of the services we offer. It is my hope that by sharing information about the office's functions and capabilities, more individuals will feel comfortable reaching out for assistance. If you are uncertain about the office's scope or have any questions, please contact us. Our team is here to support you through any challenges you may be facing.

Sincerely,

David G. Schwartz

David G. Schwartz, Ph.D.

Ombuds

University of Nevada, Las Vegas





Overview

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the activities of the Ombuds Office during the third quarter of calendar year 2024 (July 1 to September 30).

The Ombuds Office works with both individuals and groups. Most individual work is centered on one-on-one consultations or conflict coaching. Two-party work includes facilitated discussions and mediations, which are a bit more structured than discussions but are informal, voluntary, and confidential. Group activities include large facilitated discussions and workshops, mostly on communication and conflict.

The Ombuds Office also does outreach, appearing at campus and unit events to spread the word about what the office does and how to use it.

This report, and others like it, are found on our [website](#), allowing stakeholders to stay informed about the office's work. While much of what we do is private and confidential, there is no mystery about our function: we are here to support everyone on campus.

In addition to three quarterly reports, the Ombuds Office issues its annual report in January, summarizing the work of the previous calendar year.

Visitors and Contacts

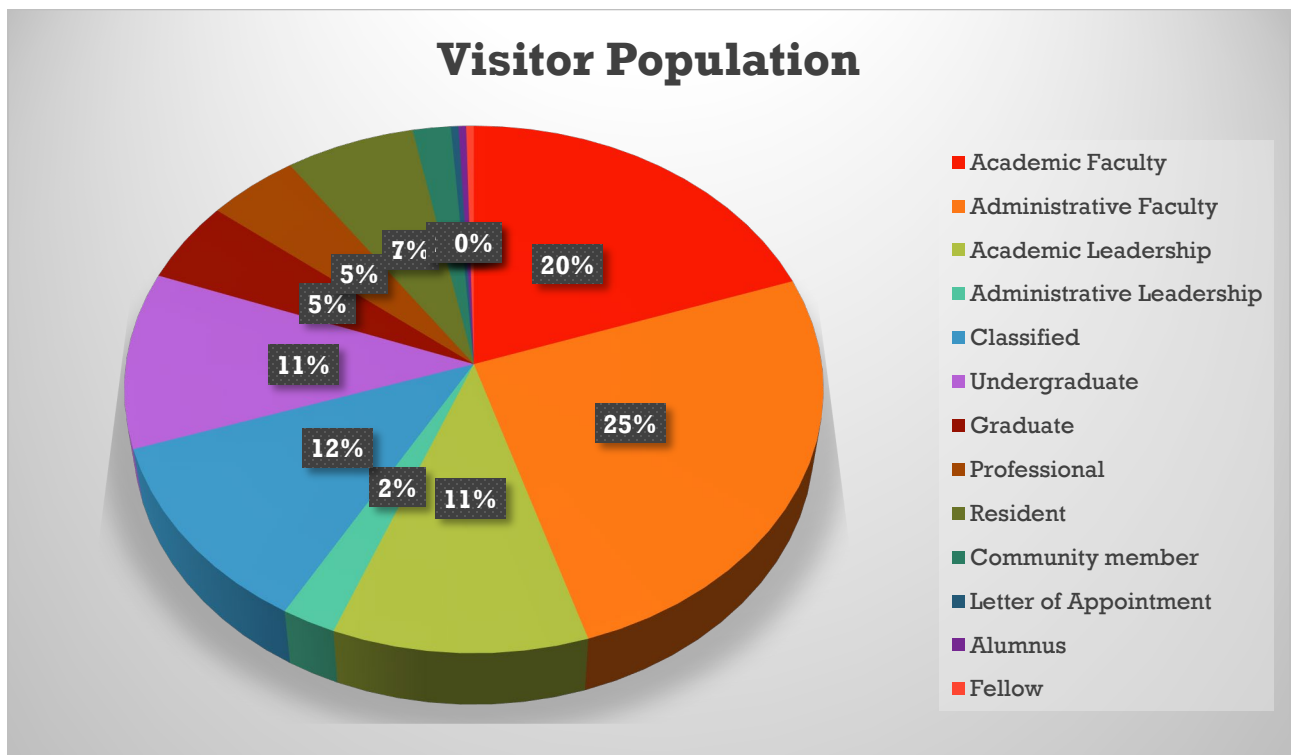
Our office uses “visitor” to mean someone communicating with the Ombuds in an official capacity. Most are one-on-one meetings conducted either in person, over the phone, or remotely, although email and chat conversations are included as well. “Visitors” do not include those who participate in workshops organized by the Ombuds Office. The Ombuds Office had **174** unique visitors this quarter.

A “contact” is a single interaction between the Ombuds and a visitor. A single visitor may have multiple contacts with the office over the quarter.

The Ombuds Office recorded **259** contacts this quarter—the most in the office’s history, and a 37 percent increase over the previous quarter, which had also set a record.

This quarter’s visitors fell in the following categories:

- 25 percent Administrative Faculty
- 20 percent Academic Faculty
- 11 percent Classified Staff
- 11 percent Undergraduate Students
- 11 percent Academic Leadership
- 7 percent Residents
- 5 percent Graduate Students
- 5 percent Professional Students
- 2 percent Admin Leadership
- 2 percent Parents/Community
- 1 percent combined Letter of Appointment, Alumnus, and Fellows

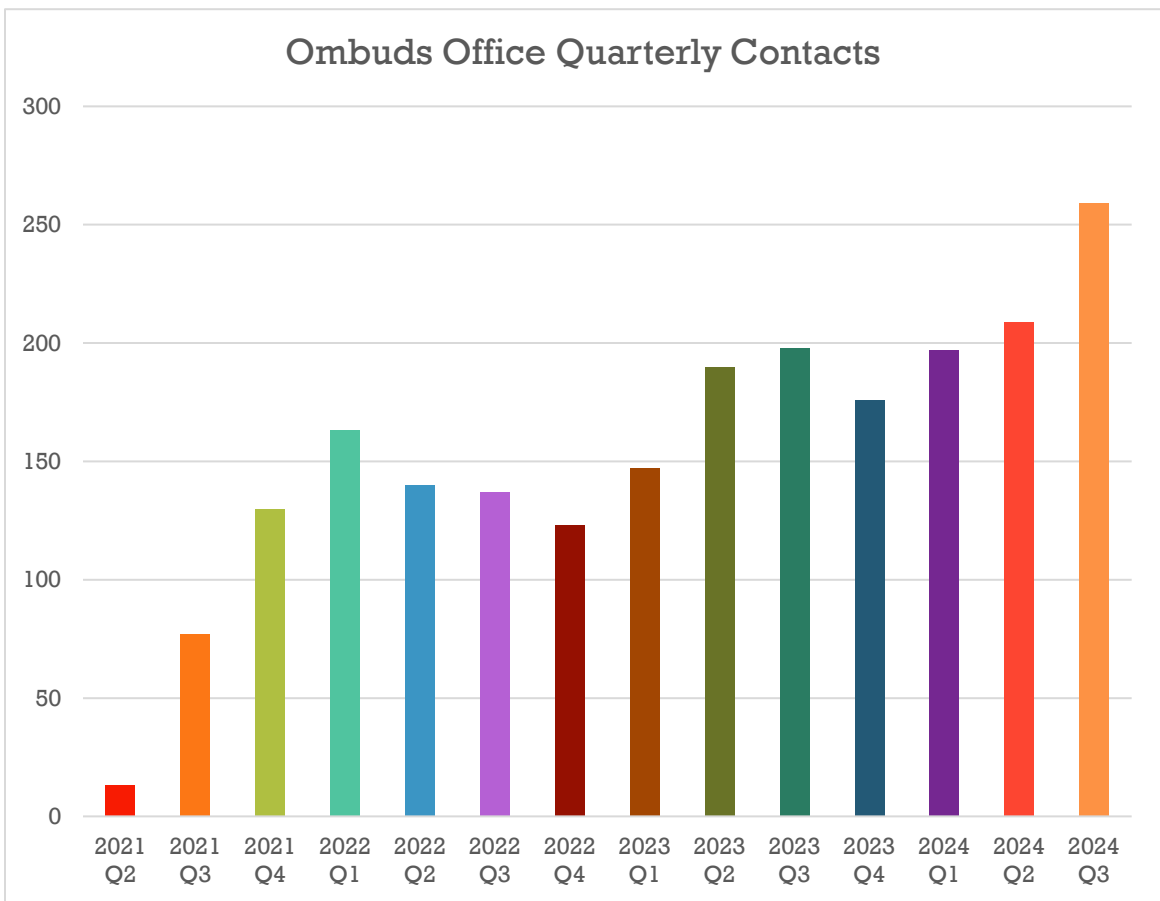


Contacts by Month



This was the Ombuds Office’s busiest quarter, and the first one in its history in which each month saw more than 80 contacts.

Contacts by Quarter

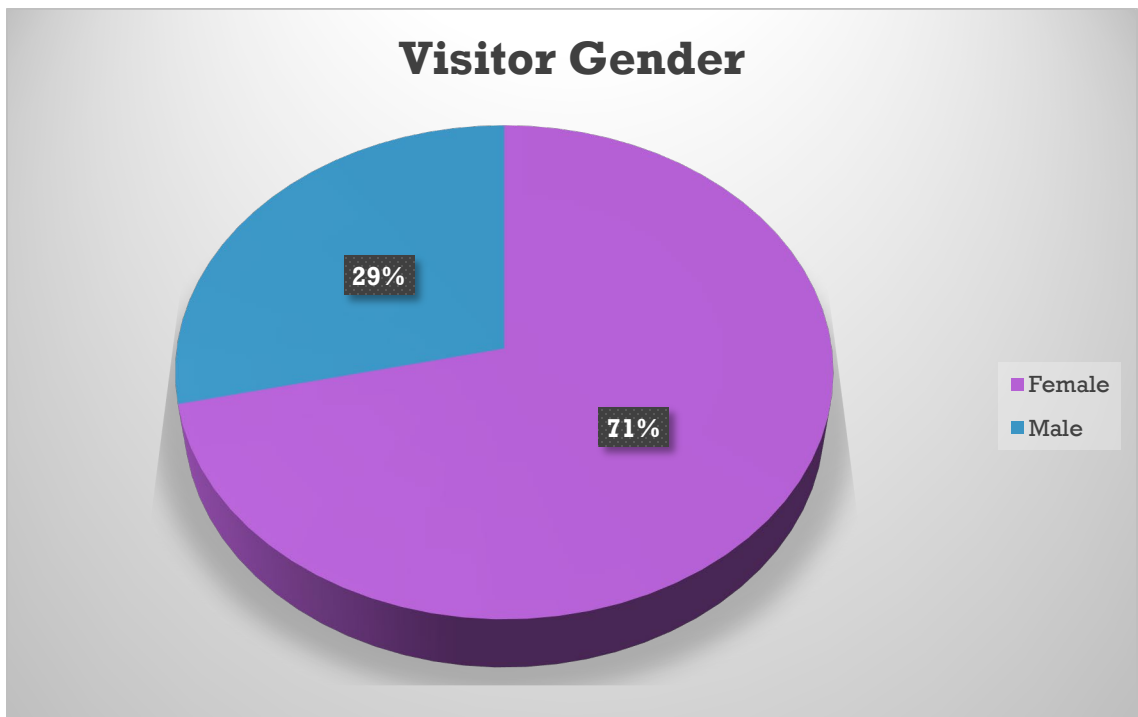


Quarterly contacts show two trends. First, the fourth quarter tends to slow down a bit. Second, the number of contacts has been increasing, possibly due to more energetic marketing efforts and positive word of mouth about the Ombuds Office.

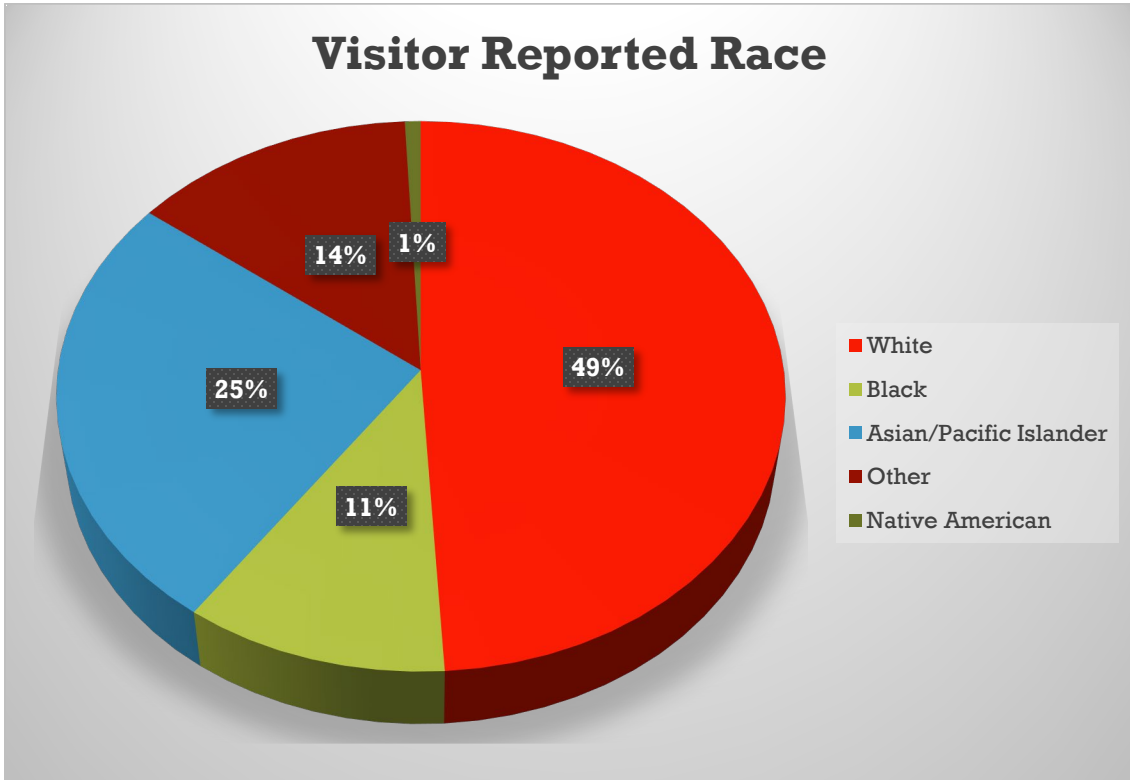


Visitor Demographics

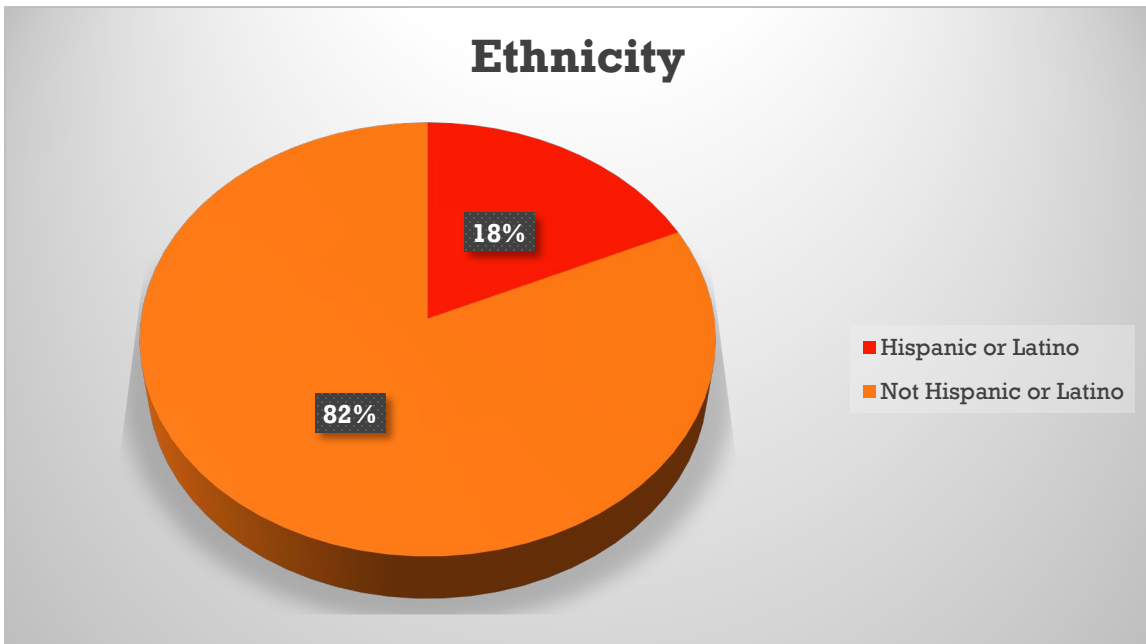
The Ombuds Office continues to serve a diverse cross-section of the UNLV community. As seems to be the case with academic ombuds offices globally, visitors to UNLV's office are more likely to be women than men.



As in previous quarters, the visitor population reflected the overall demographics of the university community.

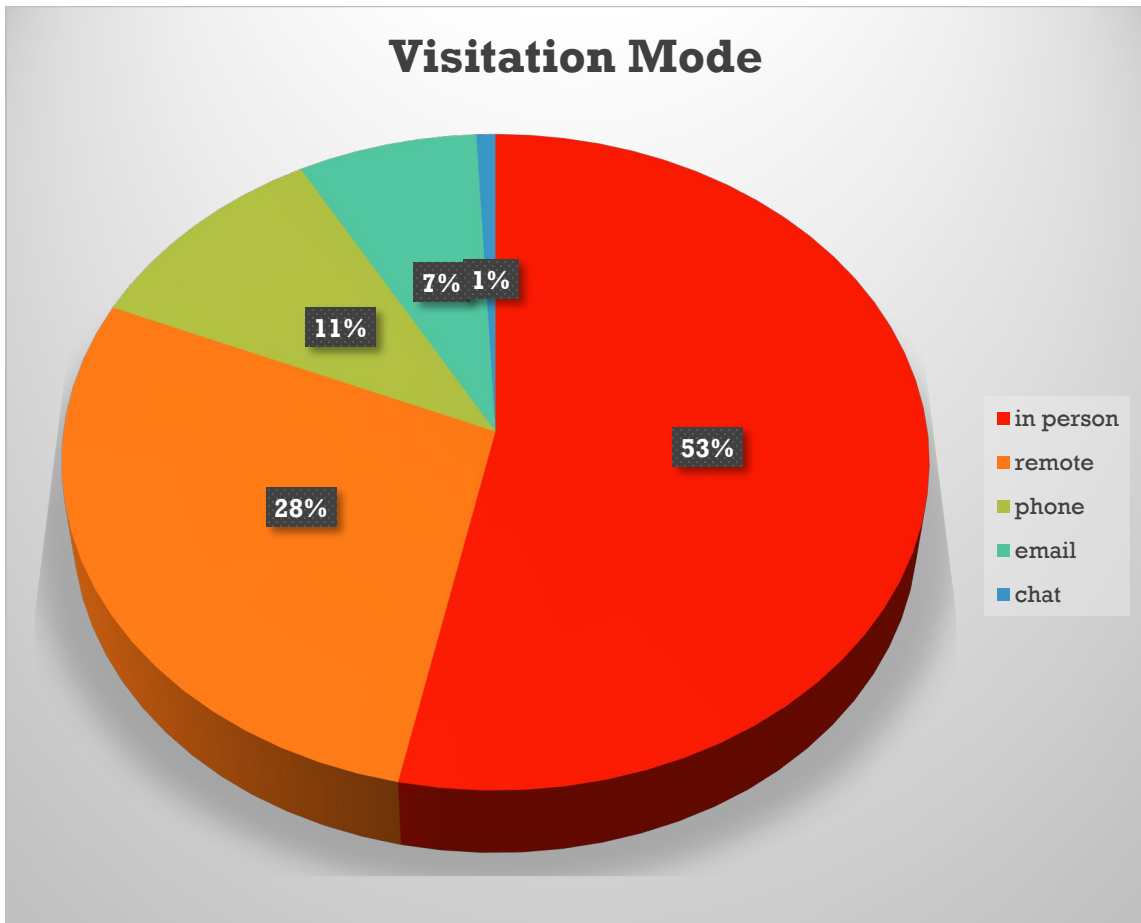


Almost one out of five visitors to the Ombuds Office reported being of Hispanic or Latino/Latinx ethnicity.



Visitation Modes

How did these visitors use the Ombuds Office? Primarily, in five ways.



Compared to last quarter, slightly fewer visitors opted to meet in person, with more choosing the telephone. One possible explanation: more service to members of the community not based on UNLV’s Maryland Parkway campus.

Still, most people (53 percent) chose to meet in person, and this does seem to be the preferred mode for most employees/students who are regularly on the Maryland Parkway campus. The office’s décor and houseplants have both been cited as reasons for preferring to talk there.

Almost unchanged from last quarter, 28 percent of contacts were virtual. In addition, 11 percent used the phone.

Only seven percent of contacts were via email, with one percent were via chat. It is important to note that both email and chat are generally discouraged as mediums for confidential discussions, as they cannot guarantee the same level of security and privacy as other communication channels.



Concerns Raised

To safeguard the confidentiality of its visitors, the Ombuds Office tracks the concerns brought forward through non-specific demographics. This method allows for the identification of common trends and patterns within the campus community without disclosing specific individual details.

Adhering to IOA best practices, the ombuds logs those concerns using the IOA's Uniform Reporting Categories (URC), which reflect concerns typically brought to ombuds offices around the world. These issues are classified under nine main categories:

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 categories, concerns are further organized into dozens of discrete classifications. For example, an issue relating to an employee's compensation is identified as **1.a**; a concern about communication between an employee by their supervisor is **2.e**; comments and behaviors perceived as insensitive by peers is **3.g**; questions about career development, coaching and mentoring are **4.k**.

Visitors often report multiple concerns, in which case multiple category codes are recorded.

The Top Ten

This quarter, these were the top ten concerns most frequently raised in the Ombuds Office, though there are actually 13, due to a five-way tie for 9th and 10th places.

Evaluative communication: 36 percent

This is either how one's supervisor, chair, or instructor communicates with them, or how one those who report to them communicate. This has been the top-raised issue since the Ombuds Office opened in 2021. Interestingly, in calendar 2023 this concern was raised by 49 percent of all visitors, suggesting that perhaps campus education efforts are bearing fruit.

Peer communication: 30 percent

This is how one's peers communicate with them, and remains a key issue, running as usual behind evaluative communication.

Consultation: 23 percent

This is a new entry into the top ten, used when visitors want to discuss an issue that is impacting someone other than them. Its high appearance suggests that people are using the office proactively in attempting to de-escalate problems early on.

Evaluative respect/treatment: 17 percent

This is how one is treated by one's supervisor/chair/instructor or vice versa. Also a perennial concern.

Peer respect/treatment: 16 percent

This is how one is treated by one's peers and colleagues.

Interdepartmental disputes: 13 percent

Now we move from conflicts between people to conflicts between units. Interdepartmental disputes often speak to structural gaps and unclear lines of authority or responsibility.

Priority setting and/or funding: 8 percent

Those who shared this concern disagreed with strategic and tactical decisions made by unit or organizational leadership.

Quality of services: 7 percent

Some were concerned with poor treatment they felt they have received as a "customer," or poor treatment meted out to others.

Tied at 5 percent:

Performance appraisal

Those with this concern had issues with how they were evaluated by their supervisor.

Departmental climate

This refers to concerns about overall morale and satisfaction at the unit, rather than organizational, level.

Bullying

Bullying involves intimidating, demeaning, or undermining others, whether in the classroom, office, or job site. Usually, but not always, there is a power differential between the bully and the bullied.

Retaliation

This refers to possible adverse action in response to an employee raising a concern, reporting a possible violation, or any other protected activity.

Career progression

These are concerns about the next step in one's career, usually a path to promotion or tenure/promotion.



Workshops & Discussions

In the third quarter, the Ombuds Office engaged with campus community in several ways, providing different experiences for different audiences in different contexts.

Outreach Events

The most basic way we interacted was by being present at outreach events, usually by staffing a table or, in the parlance of the trade, “tabling.” At these events, office staff introduces the concept of the office to passersby and explains what we do. We also give them the chance to take a brief quiz to learn their Thomas-Kilmann conflict style, and give them a matching sticker.

We did **9** outreach events in the third quarter, including both New Student Orientation and New Faculty Orientation.



Introductory Presentations

In order to educate groups about what the Ombuds Office is and what it does, we offer brief “introductory presentations” to audiences. These are usually ten to twenty minutes long, with plenty of time for questions and answers.

In the third quarter, we did **five** introductory presentations.



Workshops

Interactive workshops are the Ombuds Office’s bread and butter. In these sessions, we explore conflict resolution and communication topics in an engaging, educational, and fun way, with plenty of participant interaction ranging from case studies to role plays to games. Popular workshops this quarter included “Working Better with Challenging Individuals,” “Competent and Kind,” and a perennial favorite, “Conflict Styles.”

In the third quarter, we did **24** workshops.

Facilitated Discussions

Facilitated discussions put the spotlight on the participants—they are a chance for groups to have serious conversations about important topics with the framing provided by the Ombuds Office.

In the third quarter, we facilitated **seven** discussions.

Want to invite the ombuds to run a workshop or facilitate a discussion? You can explore the full list of workshops and learn more about facilitated discussions on our [website](#).

Spotlight: Updated Website



Over the summer, the Ombuds Office revamped its website, reducing the number of pages and making it more intuitive to find relevant information. One related improvement is the more robust automatic calendaring function made possible through Google Appointment Calendars, which allow visitors to book an appointment time with no back-and-forth, streamlining the appointment process and making the office more accessible. Those who wish to book appointments via email or a phone call still can do so.

The revamped website symbolizes the Ombuds Office's continuing mission to serve the university community and its ongoing commitment to providing its services in the most accessible and inclusive way possible.

In Closing

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

By sharing our work, we hope to foster a deeper appreciation for the value of that work and to help people feel more comfortable with using the office.

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

For more information about Ombuds Office programs and services, please visit the [Ombuds Office website](https://www.unlv.edu/ombuds).



UNLV
OMBUDS
OFFICE

www.unlv.edu/ombuds

© 2024 UNLV Ombuds Office