Summary Report
UCR Office of the Ombuds
January 2011—June 2013

Ombuds Office Summary
January 2011 – June 2013

A Note from the University Ombuds
      Over the past two and a half years, as I have served as the UCR University Ombuds, I have been privileged to witness the courage of visitors struggling to navigate through challenging circumstances   Their courage expresses itself variously as a willingness to reflect, speak up, forgive, heal, survive, apologize, or explore new ways of relating. I am humbled that they have entrusted me with their private tribulations and hope to be worthy of this trust.
      Highlanders should be proud to know that the UCR Ombuds Office is one of the oldest in existence. I am tremendously grateful to serve a community which has long had the foresight to recognize that problems and conflicts are more likely to be resolved favorably for everyone involved when community members have a safe place to go to address concerns informally and confidentially. It is an honor to carry forward the office's strong tradition of conflict resolution and I am appreciative of the latitude given to the Ombuds Office to operate independently, and impartially, in accordance with professional standards of practice.

Respectfully Submitted,

August 15th, 2013

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Overview of the Ombuds Office

      The UCR Ombuds Office has been provided services to members of the UCR community, including faculty, staff, and students, and administrators since November 12, 1968. It is currently located in 390 and 388 Surge. Andrew Larratt-Smith has served as the University Ombuds since January 2011 and is the sole permanent staff member of the office.

The Role and Function of the UCR Office of the Ombuds

The UCR Ombuds Office serves two primary functions:
1) Providing a safe place for "visitors" to navigate through difficulties at UCR.
2) Providing feedback throughout the university, about general trends or emergent issues for the purpose of producing systemic change without breaching the confidentiality of communications with visitors.

Providing a safe place for visitors to navigate through difficulties at UCR

A typical case begins when a visitor contacts the ombuds and schedules an appointment. The ombuds meets confidentially with the visitor and listens to the visitor's concerns, helping to elicit issues, needs, and interests, and to identify applicable policies. Together the ombuds and visitor generate options for resolving the visitors concerns. While the ombuds assists the visitor in weighing the pros and cons, ultimately the visitor decides which options to pursue.

Frequently the options involve the ombuds coaching the visitor about how to address the problem directly. For instance the ombuds may help the visitor think through how to engage others involved in the situation, identify various ways of bringing the situation to light, or utilize other campus resources.

Some options involve further action from the ombuds. Any such option requires the consent of both the visitor and the ombuds. For instance, the ombuds may acquire information for the visitor in order to protect the visitor's anonymity, engage in shuttle diplomacy, or facilitate a conversation between the visitor and other parties.

Providing Feedback

In working with visitor's individual concerns, the Ombuds gains insight into trends or emergent campus concerns. The ombuds meets regularly with campus administrators, particularly those involved in conflict resolution, in order to discuss concerns. The ombuds may provide feedback on these systemic issues as long as it does not breach the confidentiality of communications with individual visitors.

Standards governing Ombuds Role and Practice

The relationship between UC Riverside and the Ombuds Office, and the contours of the role of the Ombuds Office are memorialized in the UCR Ombuds Office Charter[1]. The charter incorporates additional documents governing the practice of the Ombuds Office, namely the Declaration of Best Practices for University of California Ombuds Offices[2], the

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[1] Charter Agreement for the Office of the Ombudsman UC Riverside.
http://ombuds.ucr.edu/documents/UCR%20Ombudsman%20Charter%202008.pdf
[2] Declaration of Best Practices for University of California Ombuds Offices.
http://ombudsperson.ucr.edu/documents/best_practices.pdf

International Ombudsman Association ("IOA") Code of Ethics[3], the IOA Standards of Practice[4], and the IOA Best Practices[5]. The documents articulate professional standards of practice built upon the four ethical pillars of practice: Confidentiality, Impartiality, Independence, and Informality.[6] that provide the ethical foundation that assures visitors that the Ombuds Office is a safe place to discuss their concerns.

[3] IOA Code of Ethics. http://www.ombudsassociation.org/sites/default/files/Code_Ethics_1-07.pdf
[4] IOA Standards of Practice.
http://www.ombudsassociation.org/sites/default/files/IOA_Standards_of_Practice_Oct09.pdf
[5] IOA Best Practices.
http://www.ombudsassociation.org/sites/default/files/IOA_Best_Practices_Version3_101309_0.pdf
[6] IOA Code of Ethics. http://www.ombudsassociation.org/sites/default/files/Code_Ethics_1-07.pdf
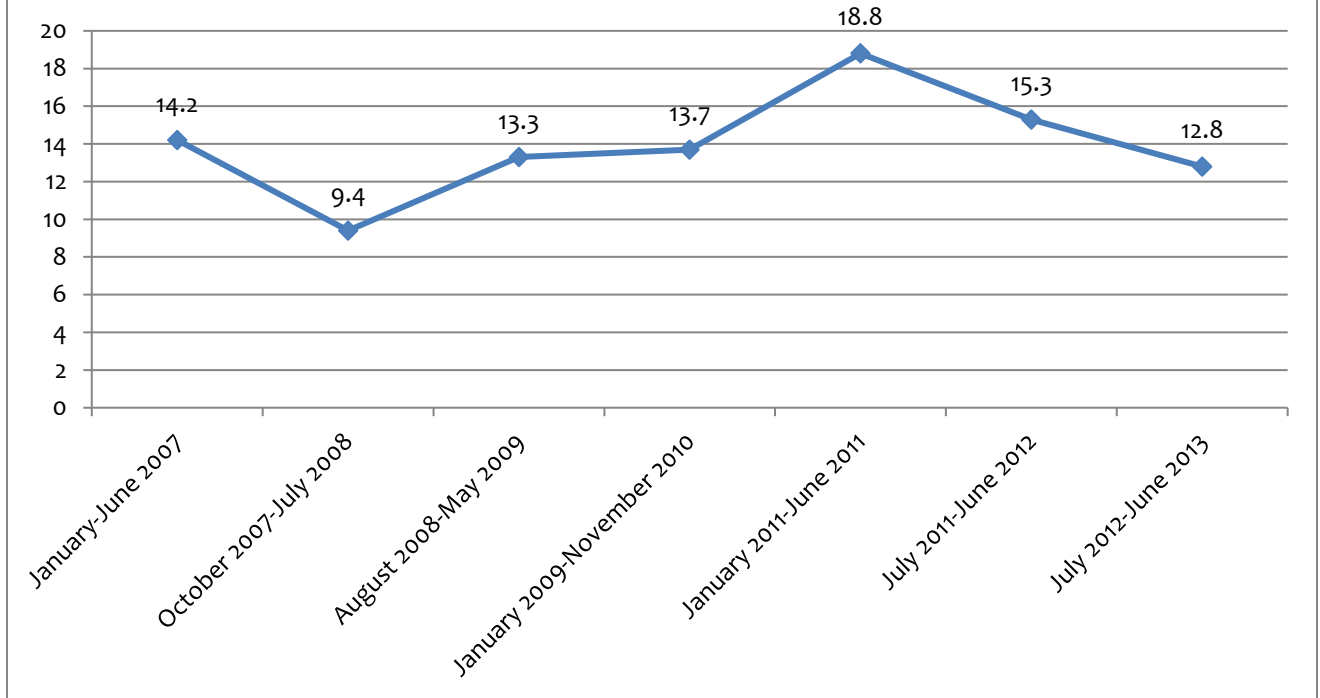
Additional Activities

In addition to the Ombuds primary duties of responding to visitors to the office, the Ombuds Office takes on additional tasks. Over the course of January 2011 to June 2013 these included:

- Development and delivery of training to staff, students, and faculty on the topics of conflict management, conflict styles, communication in conflict, understanding conflict, and ethics.
- Development of resources
- Presentations to faculty, staff, and students explaining the nature of the Ombuds office
- Meet & greets with administrators, faculty and student groups
- Providing consultation on design and implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms
- Informally reviewing & providing feedback on various university policies & procedures
- Supervision of Externs
- The office relocation from 349 Surge to 390 Surge in August 2011
- A review of the intake process and office procedures
- Administrative tasks including scheduling, budgeting, maintaining statistical information, maintenance of the UCR Ombuds website, and routine shredding of documents
- Professional development both locally at UCR and through professional ombuds associations
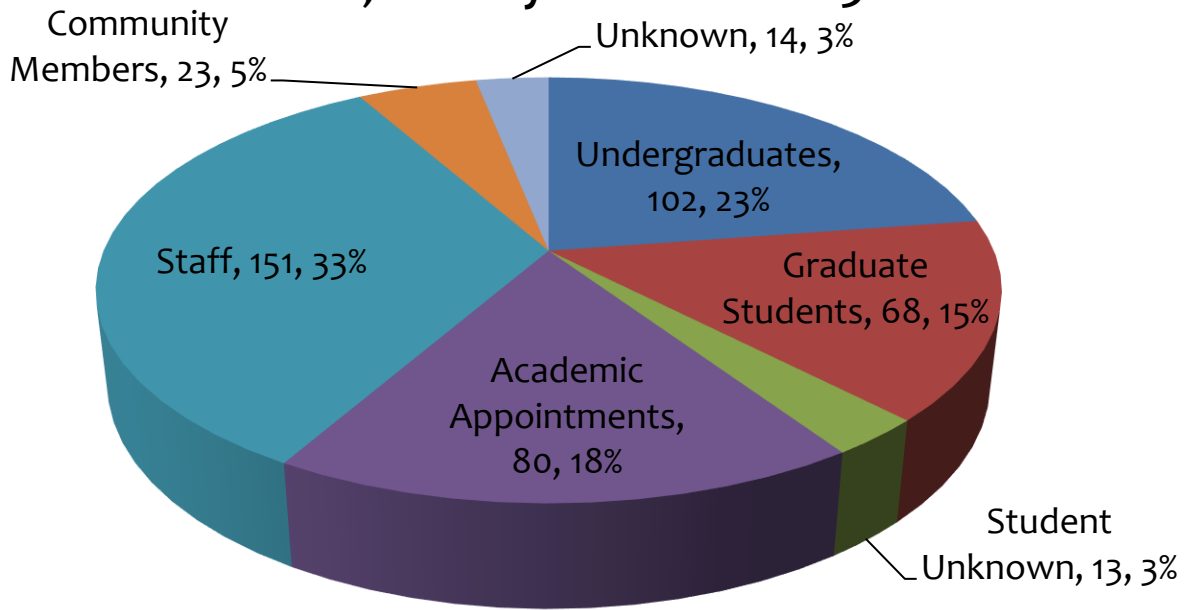
Statistics

Usage over time

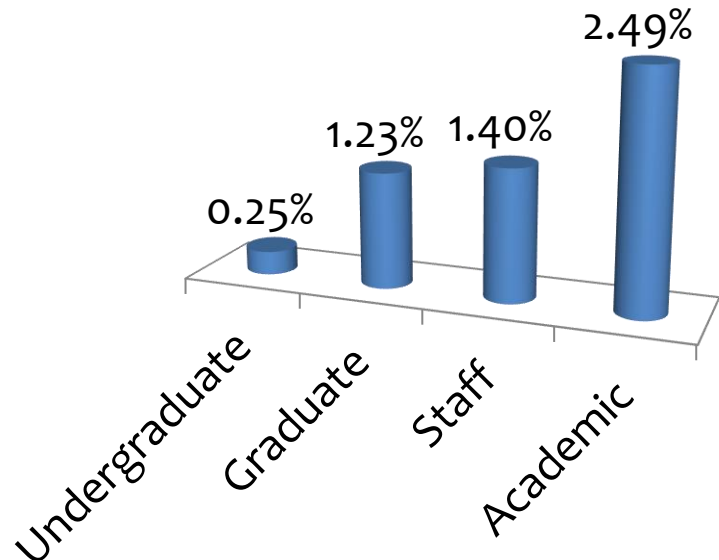**Average Number of Monthy Visitors to the UCR Ombuds Office over time**

Period	Value
January-June 2007	14.2
October 2007-July 2008	9.4
August 2008-May 2009	13.3
January 2009-November 2010	13.7
January 2011-June 2011	18.8
July 2011-June 2012	15.3
July 2012-June 2013	12.8

Breakdown by constituent group

Breakdown by Role of Visitors to the UCR Ombuds Office, January 2011 - June 2013

Community Members, 23, 5%
Unknown, 14, 3%
Undergraduates, 102, 23%
Staff, 151, 33%
Graduate Students, 68, 15%
Academic Appointments, 80, 18%
Student Unknown, 13, 3%

-Usage rates

Average Yearly Usage Rates
January 2011 – June 2013

0.25%   1.23%   1.40%   2.49%

Undergraduate   Graduate   Staff   Academic

Common Types of issues by visitor type
(from the perspective of the visitor)

Everyone
Violations or inconsistent enforcement of policies and procedures
Seeking Clarity on policies & procedures
Mistreatment by someone in authority
Fear of Retaliation
False Accusation
Sexual Harassment
Defamation
Favoritism

Academic Personnel
Departmental Conflict
Incivility / Mistreatment by peers
Reporting obligations
Manipulation of merit & tenure process
Administrative appointment process
Research Misconduct
Student Behavior / Academic Misconduct

Staff
Hostility / Mistreatment by supervisor
Management style of supervisor
Classification
Performance Appraisals
Misuse of funds
Disciplinary process
Hiring process

Graduate Students
Relationship with Advisor
Dismissal from Lab
Research Misconduct
Advancement to Candidacy / Qualifying Exam
Funding

Undergraduates
Dismissal & readmission
Grade Appeal
Navigating Administrative Bureaucracy
Treatment by Instructor / T.A.
Housing
Fees
Student Disciplinary Process
Need for Accommodation (Religious or Military)
Financial Aid
Retroactive Withdrawal

User Feedback Survey results

Future Initiatives

Increased Visibility – Despite a record high volume of cases within recent history, many on campus appear to be unaware of the presence & function of the Ombuds Office. In order to increase its effectiveness, the Ombuds Office needs to increase its visibility on campus, through outreach efforts. The Ombuds Office needs to design and implement an Outreach plan. This includes refreshing the brochure and [website][7].

Ombuds Advisory Task Force – The Ombuds Office has a single staff member. In order to be more responsive to the needs of the campus, the Ombuds plans to convene an informal

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[7] http://ombuds.ucr.edu/

Ombuds Advisory Task Force of four to six members from a cross-section of the campus which will meet four times this upcoming year to provide feedback and counsel to the Ombuds about how to engage the campus community.

Data management – The Ombuds office has no proper database for maintaining statistical data, severely limiting the offices ability to efficiently and accurately collect and analyze statistical data. A database design is required that will maintain anonymous, aggregate statistical data without recording confidential, identifying visitor information.

Anticipated Future Needs

Within the past five years, the Ombuds Office has seen some significant improvements, which have brought it into greater compliance with professional standards. A charter has been enacted[8]; the reporting relationship and physical location of the office have been moved out of the compliance area; a permanent budget has been established which is adequate for the current size of the office; funding has been made available to soundproof the current office space. The remaining challenge is staffing, which has not grown with the institution. Compared to other UC Ombuds Offices, the UCR Ombuds Office is significantly understaffed, and is the only ombuds office in the UC system without dedicated administrative support. Budgetary priorities have already been determined for the upcoming year, but if usage rates climb in the next few years, the office may struggle to meet demand, and the question of staffing will need to be revisited.

Figure 5: Total Ombuds Staff (FTE) for UC Ombuds Offices (As of Summer 2013)
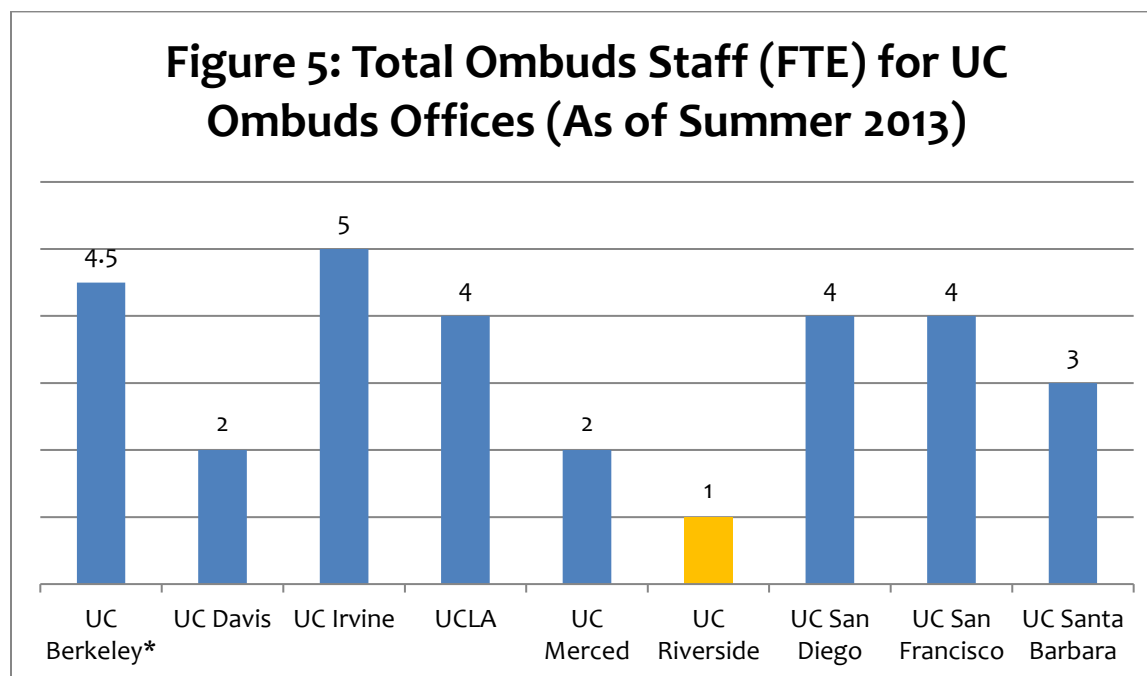
*UC Berkeley has 2 separate Ombuds Offices (Students & Staff) with a combined staff of 4.5

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[8] Charter Agreement for the Office of the Ombudsman UC Riverside.
http://ombuds.ucr.edu/documents/UCR%20Ombudsman%20Charter%202008.pdf

UC Santa Cruz no longer has an Ombuds Office, but has a Campus Conflict Resolution Center which seems to provide a similar function.

Submitted