The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Office of Ombuds Services Fiscal Year 2026

Annual Report

Submitted to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Chancellor in September 2026

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OFFICE OF OMBUDS SERVICES

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About the Office of Ombuds Service

The University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville, Office of Ombuds Services was established on May 1, 2019. The Office serves as an independent, impartial, informal, and confidential resource for faculty, staff, and graduate students on the Knoxville campus. The Office was established by Dr. Lisa Yamagata-Lynch with the support of interim Chancellor Wayne Davis to provide the university community with an informal and internal channel of conflict resolution. Since then, Chancellor Donde Plowman has supported continued operations.

Standards of Practice

The Office of Ombuds Services operates consistent with the International Ombuds Association (IOA) Standards of Practice.

Office Staff Professional Affiliation

- **Dr. Lisa Yamagata-Lynch**, university ombudsperson and director, is a member of the IOA, the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP), the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), the Association of Talent Development (ATD), International Coaching Federation (ICF), and the Tennessee Association of Professional Mediators (TAPM).
- **Dr. Nellie Haddad**, associate university ombudsperson, is a member of the IOA and the Forum of Canadian Ombudsman.
- **Ms. Duren Thompson**, educational program coordinator, is a member of the IOA and the ATD.
- **Ms. Ame Houston**, educational program support specialist, is a member of the IOA.
- **Mr. Mohammad "Shovon" Rahanur Alam**, graduate research assistant, is a member of the IOA.



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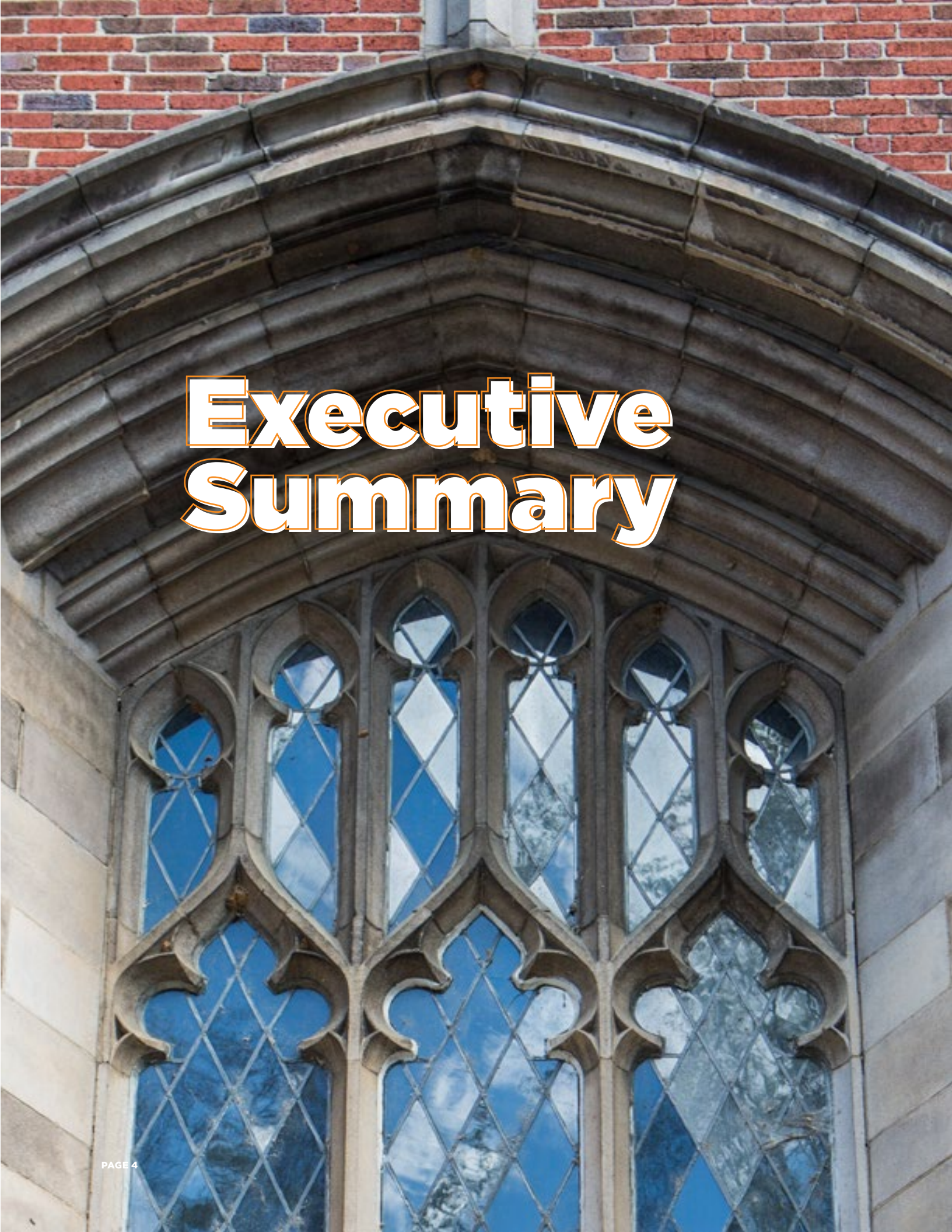
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Executive Summary

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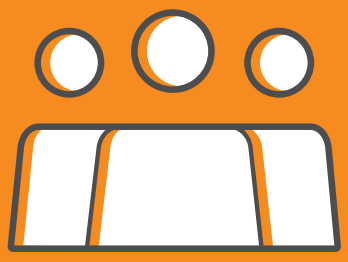
Executive Summary

This report was prepared following the specifications in the office charter and reporting guidelines of the International Ombuds Association (IOA). The purpose of this annual report is to provide a Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) data-supported summary about:

- University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville Office of Ombuds Services operations;
- services offered by the Office to the 19,411 constituent population;
- trends observed across educational programming and visitor consultations;
- service success indicators; and
- reflections on Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) service areas of focus.

Office staff facilitated 63 information sessions or workshops, providing 143 hours of educational content to a total of 1,005 participants. Staff also facilitated 39 outreach events, reaching 1,317 contacts. Workshop and information session satisfaction survey results were overwhelmingly positive. Of the 136 who responded, 123 (90.4%) expressed overall satisfaction with workshops and information sessions.

Ombuds served 363 individuals, with 622 consultations with visitors that included 493 new monthly visitors and 129 repeat monthly visitors. Visitor concerns involved 356 unique situations and 266 ongoing situations. By role, the ombuds served 74 graduate students, 144 staff, 62 faculty, 51 campus leaders (including deans, directors, and department heads), 13 undergraduate students, and 19 visitors who were not from the Knoxville campus. Visitor satisfaction survey results were overwhelmingly positive. Of the 137 who responded, 136 visitors (99.3%) expressed overall satisfaction with their ombuds consultation. In May 2026, the IOA notified the Office that it was formally recognized as one of the inaugural Certified Ombuds Office.



Ombuds served 363 unique individuals, with 622 consultations.

Our FY26 observations from facilitating educational programming and from visitor experiences were much in alignment with the previous year. Our observations include three themes related to the workplace/academic setting: (1) tension and uncertainty can lead to a sense of being stuck, (2) tension and uncertainty can result in conflict and/or positive change, (3) growth mindset and resilience can lead to positive change.

Focus areas for FY27 remain very similar to FY26 with minor updates. These focus areas include:

1. **Awareness Building**: Continue to engage in education and outreach to help constituents reframe their perceptions of tension and uncertainty.
2. **Supporting Organizational Change**: Continue providing education, consultation, and coaching services to help individuals *and* teams foster a growth mindset for flexibility and resilience.
3. **Collaborative Partnerships**: Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with formal offices to support individuals *and* teams in navigating challenges.

Visitor satisfaction survey results were overwhelmingly positive.

Of the 137 who responded, 136 visitors (99.3%) expressed overall satisfaction with their ombuds consultation.



Annual Report Overview

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Annual Report Overview

The goals for preparing this report are to:

Fulfill
the Office's responsibility, as outlined in our charter, to provide an annual report to the chancellor and organizational community members;

Adhere to
the IOA Standards of Practice;

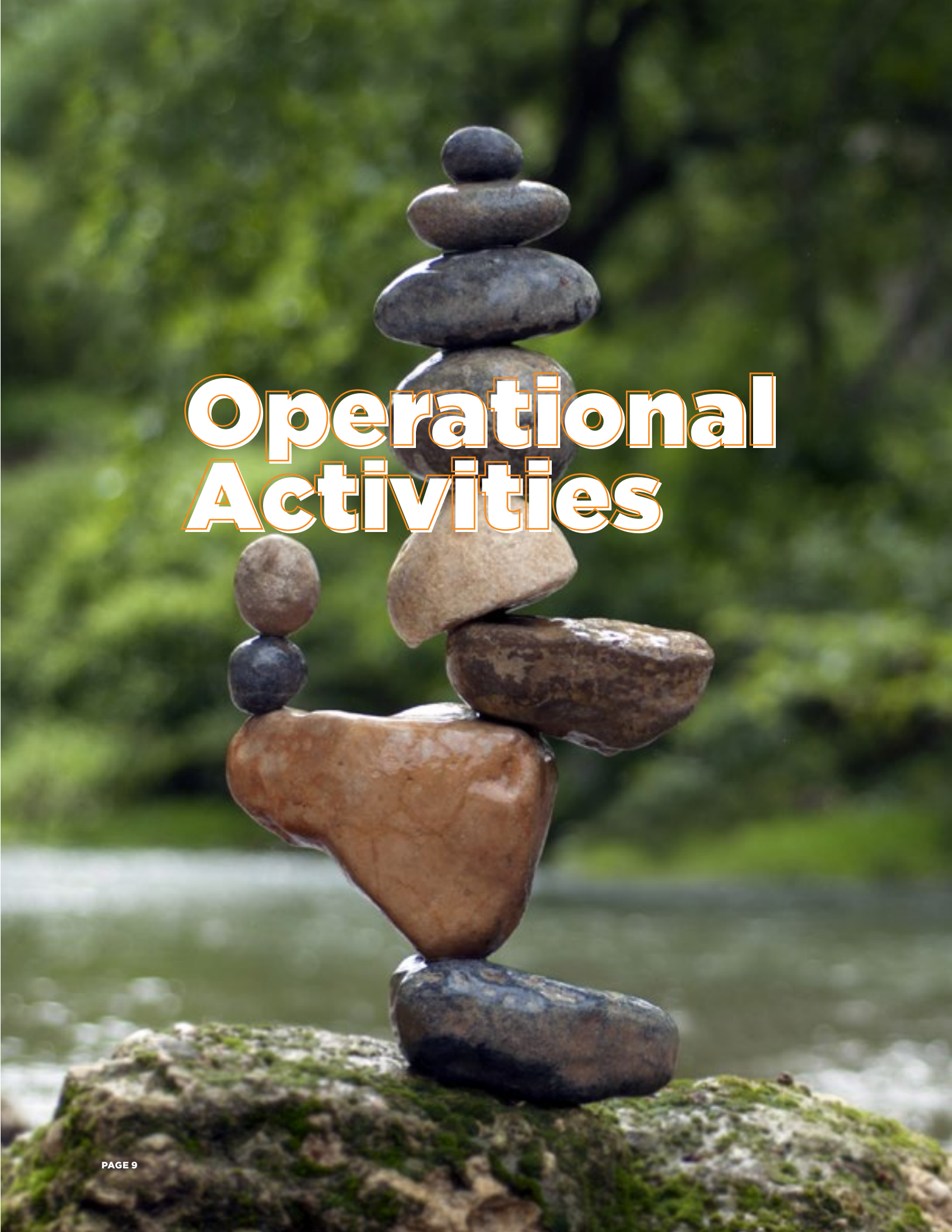
Demonstrate,
with supporting data, how the Office of Ombuds Services serves the university through educational programming and consultations; and

Provide
insights for continued organizational change.

This report includes information regarding office operations, services, observed visitor experiences, operational success indicators, and office focus areas for the next fiscal year.

Workshop and information session satisfaction survey results were overwhelmingly positive.

Of the 136 who responded, 123 (90.4%) expressed overall satisfaction with workshops and information sessions.



Operational Activities

Operational Activities

Strategic Planning

Our vision continues to be that we excel in cultivating an organizational culture where our community members approach workplace tension and uncertainty as an opportunity to reflect, learn, and thrive. We operationalize our vision through the following mission:

- **We build** our community members' capacity to constructively navigate current and future challenges, through individual consultations, coaching, and educational programming.
- **We assist** in organizational change by supporting teams to meet their full potential through leadership coaching, team coaching, mediation, and educational programming.
- **We support** organizational improvement by surfacing emerging concerns and systemic issues within the University.
- **We invite** other University units into collaborative partnerships to align our work in supporting constituent success and organizational health.
- **We contribute** to the advancement of the ombuds profession through leadership, research, and service to the international ombuds community.

Staffing

There are four full-time positions allocated to our office that include the university ombudsperson and director, associate university ombudsperson, educational program coordinator, and the educational support specialist. Additionally, we have a 20-hour graduate research assistant assigned to our office. Our office organizational chart is shown in ***Figure 1***.

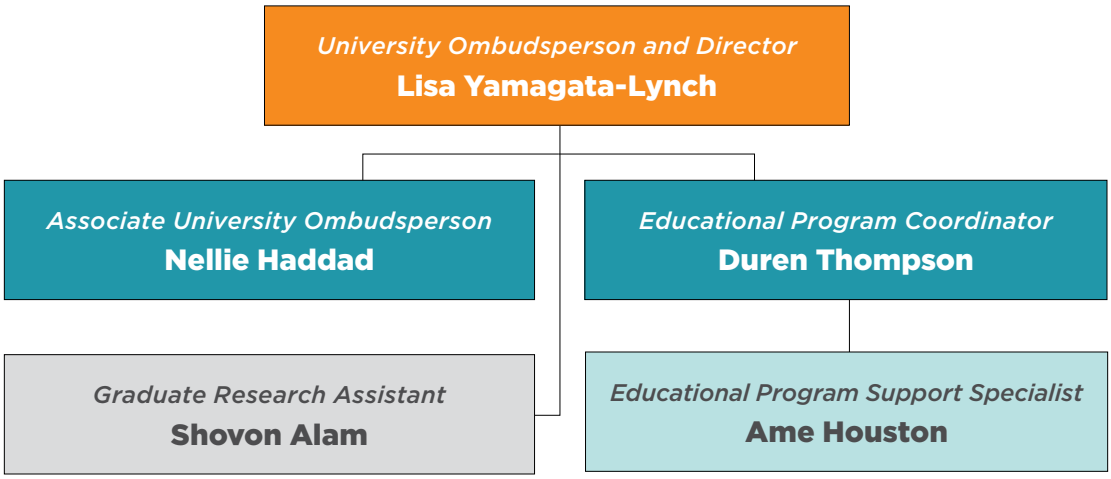


FIGURE 1. OFFICE OF OMBUDS SERVICES ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Facilities

The Office of Ombuds Services has been located in Perkins Hall 101 since 2023. Perkins 113A was allocated to our office in 2025. During FY26 our offices were updated with fresh paint and new furniture as our staff grew.

Continual Improvement

As a team, we are committed to a growth mindset and engage in continual improvement by examining how our services are meeting constituent needs. Additionally, our office staff engage in ongoing professional development to advance as professionals. Throughout FY26, our improvement efforts aimed to address the focus areas identified in our FY25 Annual Report. These areas were:

1. **Awareness Building**: Launch an education and outreach campaign to help graduate students, staff, faculty, and campus leaders reframe their perceptions of their reactions to workplace/academic tensions and uncertainties, recognizing that tensions and uncertainties are a normal part of the human experience within complex organizational ecosystems.
2. **Supporting Organizational Change**: Enhance educational programming and visitor support services with a renewed focus on helping individuals *and* teams develop the knowledge and skills needed to adopt a growth mindset when addressing tensions and uncertainties in workplace/academic settings.
3. **Collaborative Partnerships**: Strengthen existing partnerships with formal offices and their leadership to support individuals *and* teams to navigate tensions and uncertainties while fostering a workplace/academic culture of dignity and psychological safety.

As a team, we are committed to a growth mindset and engage in continual improvement by examining how our services are meeting constituent needs.

Service Improvements Addressing Constituent Needs

In FY25 we identified focus areas to better meet the needs of our constituents. In FY26, we examined various sources of data to focus our operational efforts to that end. These data sources included:

- previous year annual report findings;
- daily observations from our educational programming and visitor support services;
- workshop and visitor satisfaction surveys responses; and
- existing literature/knowledge about adult learning, conflict management, dignity consciousness, instructional design, organizational change, and psychological safety.

In the following section we describe new and notable services that we implemented to address our continual improvement plan in relation to each of our focus areas. Many of our FY26 operational activities were devoted to exploring and piloting how we can better serve our constituents and the organization with a focus on supporting teams.

Awareness Building Initiatives

Be Curious Campaign

In fall 2025, we launched our "Be Curious" messaging campaign. The goal of this campaign was to support all members of our UT community to approach tension and uncertainty with curiosity by providing quick reminders. The campaign centered around pocket-sized "Be Curious" cards we developed with QR codes directing individuals to our website for further information.

Getting Unstuck Revision

Ame, Nellie, and Shovon redesigned our virtual ombuds awareness presentation, "Getting Unstuck: Intro to Ombuds Services." The goal of this redesign was to increase participant engagement.

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Our Be Curious cards campaign is representative of our continual outreach to help constituents navigate tension and uncertainty.

Supporting Organizational Change Initiatives

Ongoing Workshop Development and Updates

We developed new workshop content and updated existing content. We developed *Harnessing Tension and Uncertainty: Conflict as Catalyst for Growth*, that we presented at the *Collaborative Leadership Summit* in October 2026 hosted by the Haslam College of Business. We also reviewed our existing conflict management offerings to address threat response strategies from a neuroscience perspective. This led to revisions in the *Intro to Conflict Management* and *Understanding Your Conflict Dynamics Profile* workshops. Based on previous participant feedback to our workshops, we also focused our revision efforts on increasing participant engagement and setting more time aside for action planning. This provided participants time to plan how they might implement methodologies learned in the workshop.

We revised our leadership-focused workshops exploring dignity and psychological safety to better align with our focus on providing support to teams

Revision of Existing Workshop Content to Support Teams

We revised our leadership-focused workshops exploring dignity and psychological safety to better align with our focus on providing support to teams. This revision provided an initial entry point for any participant to explore these topics from a team culture perspective. Resulting workshops were re-named *Co-Creating a Dignity-Conscious Workplace for Your Team* and *Creating a More Psychologically Safe Work Environment* and were offered once each in spring semester. As part of this revision process, an information session titled *Intro to Co-Creating a Dignity-Conscious Workplace for Your Team* was created and presented at the UT Leadership Conference in May 2026.

Team Coaching as New Service Offering

We expanded our services to include team coaching that adheres to the International Coaching Federation (ICF) standards. This service supports teams at UT in unlocking their collective potential for success by building a productive culture where every member is valued, engaged, and supported. Team coaching involves an agile change process while navigating tension and uncertainty. These engagements can span six to 18 months, with each meeting lasting 90 minutes to 120 minutes after a half-day kickoff. Team coaching often starts with an assessment debrief such as the Clifton Strengths for Teams, Conflict Dynamics Profile for Teams, or the Team Effectiveness Survey. During FY26 Lisa offered this service to three teams.

New and Continued Collaborative Partnerships

Asynchronous Online Course Development with Office of Innovative Technologies (OIT)

We developed a new partnership with OIT to explore asynchronous options for offering ombuds educational workshops to a wider audience at UT. Collaboration on revising *Psychological Safety: Self-Assessment and Strategies* began in Spring 2026. This partnership will continue into FY27.

Mentoring Workshop Collaboration with Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Development (ORIED) and the Graduate School

We continued our collaborative partnership with ORIED and the Graduate School for our mentoring initiatives. Duren and her collaborators revised the existing 90-minute workshop to focus on increased engagement. Renamed *Dynamic Mentoring Relationships: A Key to Better Research*, the revised workshop launched in January 2026.

Continued Staff Professional Development

Ombuds Certification Education

During FY26, our ombuds engaged in various professional development to meet their IOA ombuds certification requirements. Lisa successfully transitioned her certification to the new IOA Certified Organizational Ombuds designation.

Coaching Certification Education

To address the Office focus area for supporting both individuals *and* teams, Lisa engaged in professional development activities to maintain her ICF Associate Certified Coach (ACC) status. Lisa became certified in several assessment-based coaching programs including Clifton Strengths, Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0 (EQi-2.0), and Team Effectiveness Survey (TES). Additionally, Lisa engaged in ICF-accredited team coaching educational programs to gain Advanced Certification in Team Coaching (ACTC).

All our staff members continued to participate in professional development engagements facilitated by UT offices, IOA, and other professional organizations.

Staff Professional Development

All our staff members continued to participate in professional development engagements facilitated by UT offices, IOA, and other professional organizations.

Notable professional development engagements facilitated by the IOA include:

- 2025 IOA September Symposium
- 2026 IOA Conference
- IOA Course: *Foundations of the Organizational Ombuds*
- IOA Seminar: *Cultural Humility*
- IOA Seminar: *Navigating Confidentiality as an Ombuds Everyday*
- IOA Webinar: *Nervous System Literacy*

Notable professional development engagements facilitated by other organizations include:

- 2025 NeuroLeadership Institute (NLI) Thrive Summit
- 2025 International Coaching Federation Converge Conference
- 2026 Association of Talent Development International Virtual Conference
- AIIR Consulting *AIIR Team Effectiveness Survey (TES)* Practitioner Certification
- Center for Creative Leadership: *Conflict Dynamics Profile* Certification
- Center for Executive Coaching Course: *ICF Team Coaching*
- Crucial Learning Course: *Crucial Conversations for Mastering Dialogue Organizational Trainer Certification*
- Emotional Intelligence Training Company: *EQi-2.0* Certification
- Gallup Course: *Global Strengths Coach* Certification
- NLI Workshop: *Brain-Based Facilitation*
- NLI Workshop: *Brain-Based Team Coaching*

Office Services

In FY26, the Knoxville campus constituent population (including graduate students, staff, faculty, and campus leaders) was 19,411 individuals. Our FY26 education and outreach and visitor service activities are further described below.

Education and Outreach

The Office provided several types of educational programming through our open enrollment and requested by-invitation workshops. These included:

- original workshop content developed by our staff,
- assessment-based workshop content as certified facilitators,
- workshop content as certified organizational trainers, and
- the Employee Conflict Navigator Certificate (ECN) program.

The Office provided multiple types of visitor support services, including: individual consultation, individual consultation in preparation for mediation, and mediation.

Our original content educational programming, offered at no cost to participants, included both 90-minute workshops and 45–60-minute information sessions. Educational programming that our staff are certified to offer carried an assessment or materials-access fee for participants and included 90-minute workshops and 8- or 12-hour intensive workshops. All our open enrollment programming was delivered virtually on Zoom, while requested sessions were delivered virtually, in-person, or in a hybrid format. In addition, ombuds staff provided follow-up coaching for our educational programming.

Our staff engaged in several types of outreach including:

- presentations,
- panel participation,
- vendor booth tabling,
- 1:1 networking, and
- dissemination of physical and digital materials.

Visitor Support Services

The Office provided multiple types of visitor support services, including:

- individual consultation,
- individual consultation in preparation for mediation, and
- mediation.

We provided these services through in-person meetings at our offices in Perkins Hall, through virtual meetings on Zoom, and on the phone.

Practitioner Research

Our staff contributed to the ombuds field knowledge development through peer-reviewed conference presentations. We engage in this work is for the professional ombuds community.



Observed Trends

Observed Trends

Education and Outreach Participation Trends

Educational Program Offerings and Enrollment

In FY26, we experienced continued growth in demand for educational programming. Our staff facilitated a total of 63 information sessions and workshops, providing 143 hours of engagement to a total of 1,005 participants. ***Table 1.***, on the next page, provides a summary of FY26 workshops offered, session lengths, number of offerings, and enrollment numbers.

The Office of Ombuds held 63 workshops in FY26.

These totaled 143 hours of educational programming serving 1,005 participants.

TABLE 1. EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS AND ENROLLMENT BY TOPIC AREA			
WORKSHOP OFFERED	**SESSION LENGTH**	**NUMBER OF OFFERINGS**	**ENROLLMENT**
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT			
Intro to Conflict Management	1 hour	5	85*
Harnessing Tension and Uncertainty: Conflict as Catalyst	0.75-1.25 hrs	6	173*
Understanding Your Conflict Dynamics Profile	1.5 hours	6	111
CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS			
Intro to Crucial Conversations for Accountability and the Employee Conflict Navigator Certificate program	1 hour	1	2
Intro to Crucial Conversations for Mastering Dialogue and the Employee Conflict Navigator Certificate program	1 hour	2	13
Crucial Conversations for Mastering Dialogue	12 hours	6	74
DIGNITY WORKSHOP SERIES			
Co-Creating a Dignity-Conscious Work Environment	1.5 hours	3	28
Dignity: A Key to Conflict	1.5 hours	6	86*
PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK WORKSHOP SERIES			
Intro to Feedback: Constructive Performance Dialogue	1-1.25 hours	2	38
Intro to Growth Mindset	0.5 hours	1	33
Intro to Speaking Up More Assertively	1-1.25 hours	2	22
Giving Feedback Well: Creating Safe Dialogue	1.5 hours	4	42
Receiving Feedback Well: Crafting Constructive Responses	1.5 hours	6	71
Speaking Up: Communicating More Assertively	1.5 hours	6	67
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY WORKSHOP SERIES			
Intro to Creating Dynamic Mentoring Relationships	1 hour	1	22
Intro to Psychological Safety	0.5 hours	2	84
Dynamic Mentoring Relationships: A Key to Better Research	1.5 hours	1	13
Creating a More Psychologically Safe Work Environment	1.5 hours	1	10
Psychological Safety: Self-Assessment & Strategies	1.5 hours	2	31*
TOTAL	**143 hours**	**63**	**1,005**

*Includes participants who are not part of our constituency.

Figure 2 is a summary of total enrollment in ombuds information sessions and workshops. Participants showed by far the highest interest in *Conflict Management* with a total of 369 participants, 173 of whom participated in information sessions and 196 participated in workshops. The second most popular topic was *Performance Feedback* with 273 participants, 93 of whom participated in information sessions and 180 participated in workshops. The third most popular topic was *Psychological Safety* with 160 participants, 106 of whom participated in information sessions and 54 participated in workshops. Next, 114 participants were interested in *Dignity*, all of whom participated in workshops. Finally, 89 participants were interested in *Crucial Conversations*, 15 of whom participated in information sessions and 74 participated in the 12-hour workshop.

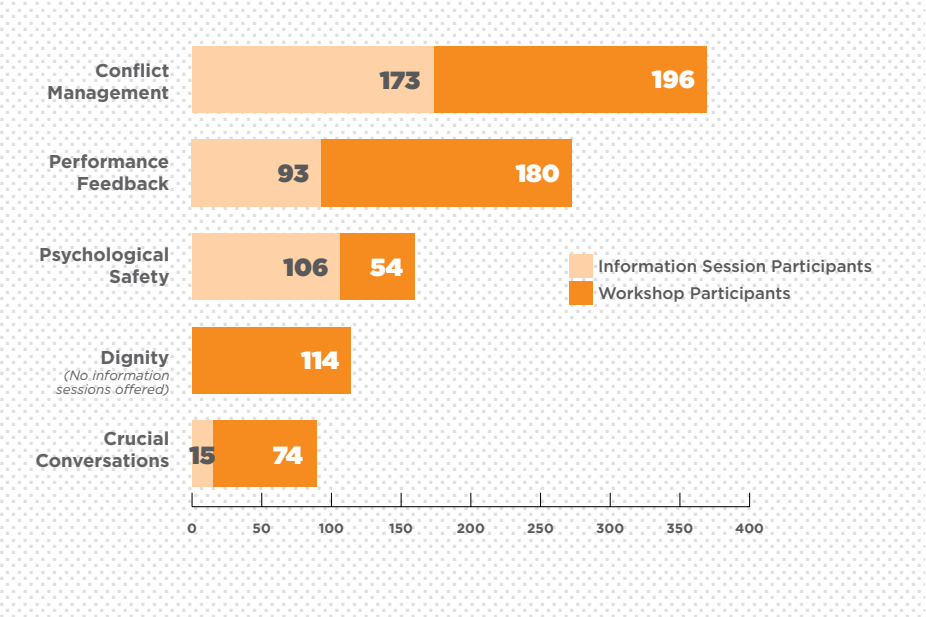


FIGURE 2. EDUCATIONAL EVENT ENROLLMENT BY TOPIC AREA

Educational Event Participant Roles

When possible, we collected information about our educational event participants' organizational roles. Of the 1,005 total participants, the vast majority, 927, were from the Knoxville campus. ***Figure 3*** shows the organizational role distribution for our information session and workshop participants. Staff was the largest group with 497 participants (49.5%) and Graduate Students were the second largest group with 189 participants (18.8%). There were 144 participants (14.3%) who were Campus Leaders and 97 Faculty participants (9.7%). In addition, there were 78 participants (7.8%) who were Non-Constituents, including undergraduate students, external audiences, and individuals from other campuses and the UT System.

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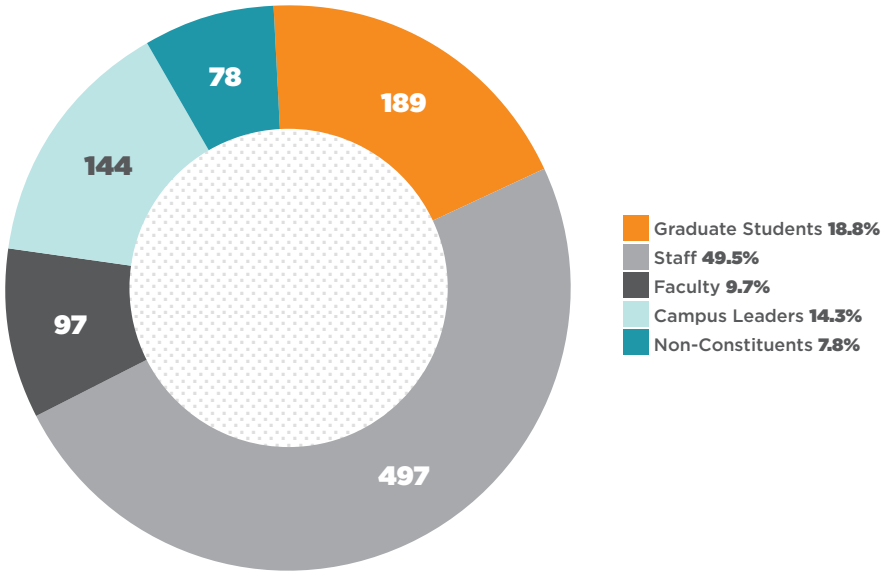


FIGURE 3. ROLE DISTRIBUTION FOR INFORMATION SESSION AND WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

ECN Certificate Program

During FY26, 21 individuals, including staff, faculty, and campus leaders, participated in our ECN Certificate Program. The ECN program required participants to complete at least 18 workshop hours in addition to 2 hours of workshop follow-up coaching. Required workshops in the program included: 12 hours of *Crucial Conversations for Mastering Dialogue* and 1.75 hours of *Understanding Your Conflict Dynamics Profile*. Additionally, program participants were required to complete 4 or more workshop hours related to communication and/or conflict management facilitated by our office or other UT offices.

This year, we awarded the ECN certificate to seven employees. ***Table 2*** lists the name, title, department, and certification date for each of the seven participants.



7 individuals earned an ECN certificate in FY26.

The ECN Certificate is given to those who complete at least 18 workshop hours plus 2 hours of follow-up coaching.

TABLE 2. ECN CERTIFIED EMPLOYEES			
NAME	**JOB TITLE**	**DEPARTMENT**	**CERTIFICATION DATE**
Mariah Cozart	Student Services Specialist	School of Information Sciences	July 2025
Iama (Ariane) Price	Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent	County Extension, UTIA	September 2025
Sarah Linn-Peirano	Assistant Professor	Biomedical and Diagnostic Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine	October 2025
Keri Boyd	Student Engagement Coordinator	Student Engagement & Success, Haslam College of Business	November 2025
Matthew Pamental	Teaching Associate Professor	Philosophy, College of Arts & Sciences	December 2025
Brandi Price-Weaver	Constituent Management Specialist	UT Foundations	Febuary 2026
Ame Houston	Educational Program Support Specialist	Office of Ombuds Services	June 2026

Outreach Event Participation & Contacts

Outreach events are designed to raise awareness and build trust in the Office's staff and services. Ombuds staff contact length with participants during outreach events ranged from 1 minute for tabling events to 75 minutes for presentations. ***Table 3*** provides a summary of outreach events and contacts.

TABLE 3. OUTREACH EVENTS AND CONTACTS			
EVENT	**CONTACT LENGTH**	**NO. OF EVENTS**	**NO. PARTICIPANTS**
1:1 Outreach - In-Person or By Email	5–30 minutes	4	13
Community Resource/Vendor Tabling	60–180 minutes	7	360*
Getting Unstuck: Intro to Ombuds Services Presentation	30–60 minutes	16	666
Materials Giveaway		5	117
Ombuds Tea Event	120 mintes	1	11
Orientation/Retreat/Meeting Ombuds Overview	10–25 minutes	5	137
What is an Ombuds? Information Session	75 minutes	1	13
	TOTAL	**39**	**1317**

***Includes participants who are not part of our constituency.**

Visitor Support Services Trends

Visitor Traffic Trend Metrics that Represent Ombuds Work Rate

To maintain confidentiality while ensuring engagement in reliable and systematic data collection and analysis, we identified the following metrics, collectively representing visitor traffic trends and ombuds work rate:

- **Individuals Served**, the number of unique individuals who had contact with the ombuds as visitors during the fiscal year;
- **New Visitors for the Month**, the number of unique visitors who had contact with the ombuds each month in a fiscal year;
- **Repeat Visitors for the Month**, the number of visitors who met with ombuds more than once in a month;
- **Visitor Contacts**, the number of contacts that ombuds had with visitors, which includes both new visitors for the month and repeat visitors for the month;
- **New Situations**, the number of unique situations that visitors shared with an ombuds during the fiscal year; and
- **Ongoing Situations**, the number of repeated situations that visitors shared with an ombuds.

Of the 344 individuals we served, 240 were women (69.8%), 99 were men (28.8%), and 5 were visitors for whom gender data was not available (1.5%).

Demographics of Individual Visitors Served

In FY26, our ombuds served a total of 363 individuals, which included individuals who were not from the Knoxville campus. Of our 19,411 Knoxville campus constituency, our ombuds served 344 (1.8%) individuals. As a reference point for comparison, we retrieved data from the university human resources system and reviewed data included in the 2025-2026 *UT Fact Book* published by Institutional Research and Strategic Analysis (IRSA). In all data figures and tables below, the percentage of individuals who we served with unknown demographic data is higher than the population because anonymous phone contact visitors are included in the data.

Figure 4 shows gender information retrieved from the Knoxville campus human resources system. Individual visitors whose gender information was not available are marked "not available." Of the 344 individuals we served, 240 were women (69.8%), 99 were men (28.8%), and 5 were visitors for whom gender data was not available (1.5%).

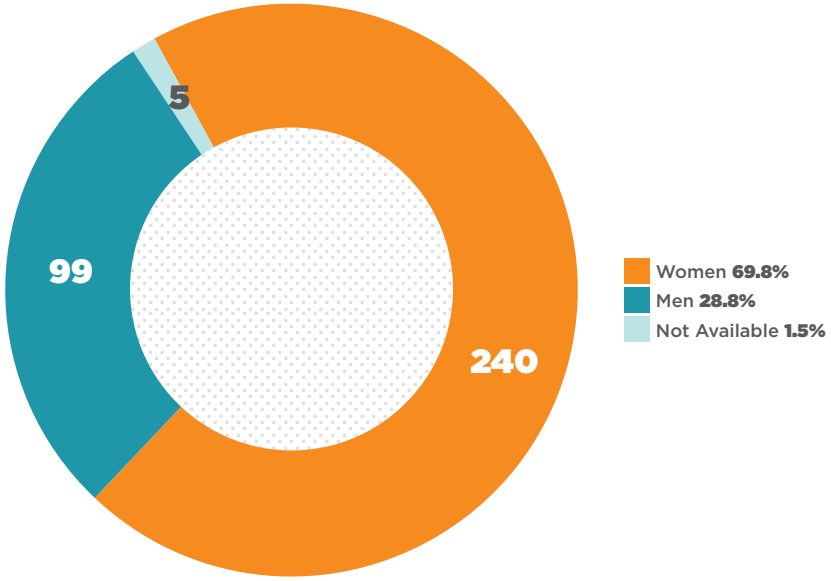


FIGURE 4. GENDER DISTRIBUTION FOR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS SERVED

Table 4 shows the gender distribution of individual visitors whom we served in comparison to the campus constituency data in the *UT Fact Book*.

TABLE 4. INDIVIDUAL VISITORS SERVED AND POPULATION GENDER DISTRIBUTION COMPARISON

	WOMEN	MEN	UNKNOWN
Individuals Served	69.8%	28.8%	1.5%
UT Fact Book Data	53.5%	46.5%	0%

Figure 5 shows the individuals whom the ombuds served by their organizational roles including individuals who were not associated with our campus. Staff was the largest group served, with a total of 144 individuals. Of these, 52 were Non-Exempt Staff (14.3%) and 92 were Exempt Staff (25.3%). Graduate Students were the second largest group served, with 74 individuals (20.4%). Faculty was the third largest group served, with 62 individuals. Of these, 16 were Non-Tenure Track Faculty (4.4%) and 46 were Tenure Track Faculty (12.7%). In addition, there were 51 Campus Leaders (14.0%) and 13 Undergraduate Students (3.6%) from the Knoxville campus. Among all the individuals served, 60 visitors had formal supervisory roles. Finally, we served 19 individuals who were not from the Knoxville campus who may have been individuals from sister campuses and/or parents (5.2%).

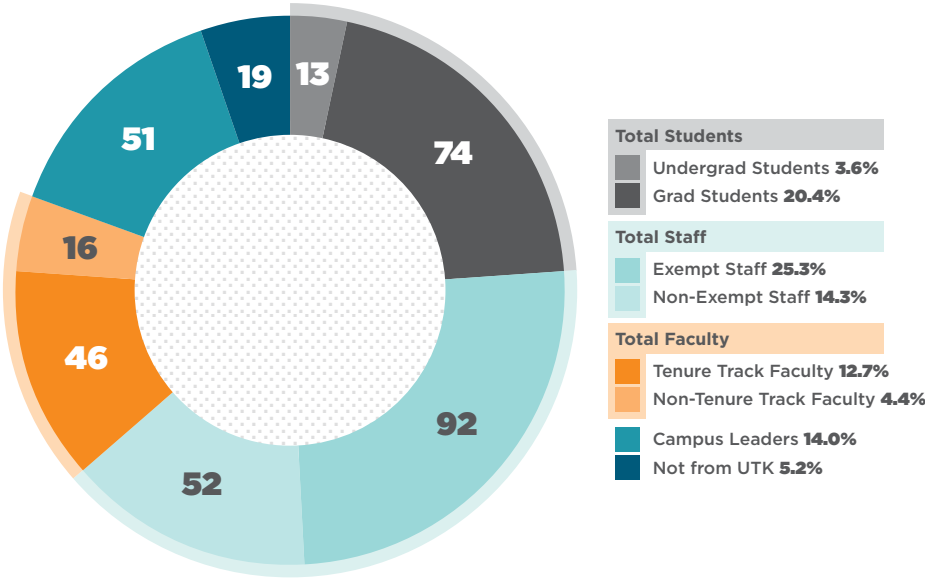


FIGURE 5. ROLE DISTRIBUTION FOR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS SERVED

Visitors and Their Situations

Figure 6 shows a five-year trend in visitor support services. In FY26, ombuds served 363 individual visitors. Among those individuals, ombuds had 622 visitor contacts. Of the visitor contacts, 493 were new visitors for the month and 129 were repeat visitors for the month. Visitors shared concerns with ombuds regarding 356 new situations. Additionally, ombuds worked with 266 ongoing situations.



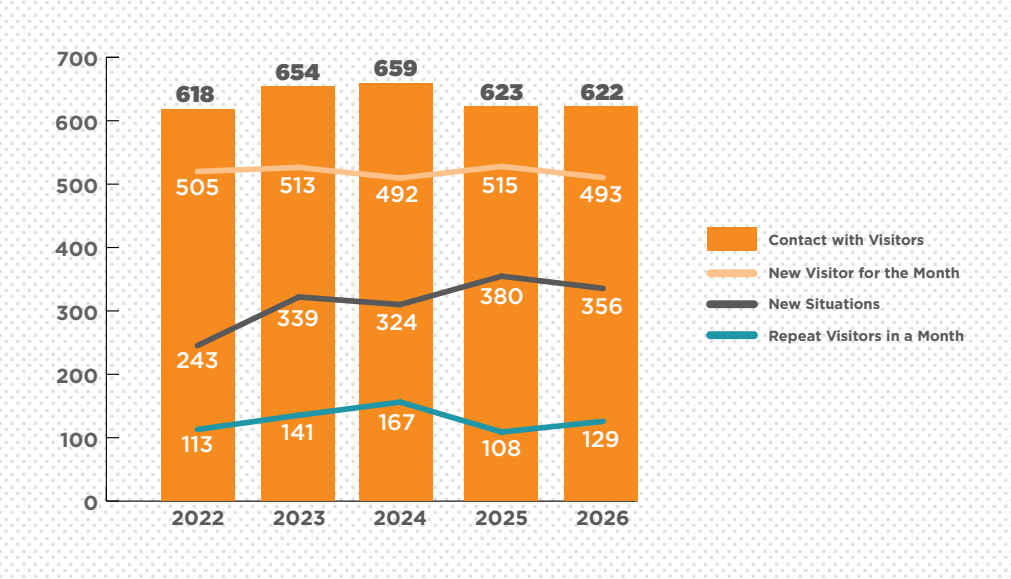


FIGURE 6. FIVE-YEAR VISITOR TRAFFIC TRENDS

Looking at the five-year visitor traffic trends, we have steadily maintained more than 600 total contacts with visitors per year. The individuals served since FY22 have also remained steady at more than 300 per year.

Ombuds Contribution to Systemic Organizational Situations

Touchpoints, a metric that represents potential ombuds contribution to our organization, are interactions between ombuds and someone other than the visitor. These are often individuals in leadership positions in partner offices, whom visitors grant the ombuds permission to contact to discuss the visitor's situation and/or provide systemic organizational feedback.

Through touchpoint contacts, ombuds often assist organizational leaders by providing them an opportunity to:

- address issues that may be disruptive to the organization,
- identify patterns of communication/behavior that leaders may wish to address,
- assist in organizational change efforts,
- provide information that is helpful to the visitor,
- follow up on visitor situations that ombuds are working with leaders to strategize and engage with, and
- connect one resource with another to work collaboratively as needed in conflict management situations (Rowe & Gadlin, 2014).

During FY26, ombuds had 83 contacts with touchpoints. Of the total touchpoint contacts, 25 were related to individual matters, 41 were related to systemic organizational matters, and 17 were related to both individual and systemic matters. When the ombuds contacted touchpoints related to individual matters, information was obtained on behalf of a visitor that was relevant to their experiences. When we contacted touchpoints related to systemic matters, it was likely to involve policies and procedures that could affect a wide group of individuals.

Visitor Experience Working with the Ombuds

Many visitors met with ombuds for:

- thinking aloud (421 occurrences),
- reflecting on experiences (340 occurrences), and
- seeking information (310 occurrences).

While meeting with ombuds, visitors engaged in:

- exploration and evaluation of options (485 occurrences),
- surfacing issues (265 occurrences), and
- connecting to resources (203 occurrences).

Visitor Referral Sources

Visitors often felt stuck and turned to the ombuds to explore how to restore stability and navigate ongoing situations.

Visitors can indicate how they learned about the Office by selecting from a list of possible referral sources in OnceHub, our online meeting scheduling system. Of the 363 unique visitor responses, the top referral sources included:

- a presentation or an event (90 visitors);
- college and/or departmental leadership, a supervisor, and/or an advisor (84 visitors);
- previous work with an ombuds (55 visitors); and
- peers and/or colleagues (49 visitors).

While many referral sources stem from the Office's staff services like presentations or events or from previous work with ombuds, word-of-mouth referrals from college or departmental leadership, supervisors, advisors, and peers continue to be a significant way visitors discover us.

Emerging Themes from Ombuds Staff Observations

From our observations we identified themes shared across our constituency who engaged with our office. In this section we do not provide generalizable claims about the entire constituent population that we serve, and instead share observations of particularities (Stake, 1995). In FY25 we reported emerging themes across all our constituent groups. For FY26 we have decided to do the same, and we do not see much difference in our findings. Therefore, discussion of findings will be briefly summarized with some additional information. The framework in which we interpreted our findings were influenced by the literature related to dignity (Hicks, 2001; 2018), emotions (Barett; 2012; 2017), growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; 2019), and psychological tensions (Yamagata-Lynch 2003; 2010).

Tension and Uncertainty Can Lead to a Sense of Being Stuck

Many visitors shared that challenges in communication with supervisors or others in evaluative roles lead them to tensions in the workplace and/or academic setting. These interactions commonly centered on individual performance and department climate. Uncertainty resulting from these communications sometimes destabilized relationships, which increased emotional disquiet. In some situations, the discomfort spread across multiple team members, disrupting the overall team dynamic and weakening individuals' sense of belonging. Visitors often felt stuck and turned to the ombuds to explore how to restore stability and navigate ongoing situations. When working with teams, the ombuds created space for each member to reflect on how they shared a sense of being stuck, and how they might be able to move forward by identifying a team purpose to support their future work together.

Tension and Uncertainty Can Result in Conflict and/or Positive Change

Many visitors shared that they came to see the ombuds because they were unsure of how to address ongoing tension in the workplace and/or academic setting. The uncertainty from these situations often escalated into conflict. During consultations, visitors asked for support in exploring practical options for addressing the conflict. When visitors regained a sense of stability, some worked with the ombuds to develop creative solutions, including ways to engage in dialogue with others while proactively fostering a psychologically safe environment. When working with teams in conflict, the ombuds facilitated discussion to raise awareness around desirable and undesirable conflict behavior and how each member might approach conflict to encourage positive change within their team.

Growth Mindset and Resilience Can Lead to Positive Change

Many visitors shared that they struggled to move past their initial personal response to challenges they experienced in the workplace and/or academic setting. This often made it difficult for them to explore creative solutions. For some visitors, embracing vulnerability increased their ability to engage in the situation with an open mind. Visitors who experienced a breakthrough in identifying creative solutions were more likely to adopt a growth mindset rather than staying in a fixed mindset. When working with teams, the ombuds often began group sessions by exploring what it could look like if the entire team embraced a growth mindset, and how that might be reflected in their team values and norms.

Visitors who experienced a breakthrough in identifying creative solutions were more likely to adopt a growth mindset rather than staying in a fixed mindset.

IOA Uniform Reporting Category Trends

The IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (Dale, Ganci, Miller, & Sebok, 2008) include the main themes listed below.

1. Compensation and 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

We observed that the following IOA subcategories were prevalent in visitor experiences: work related stress and work life balance within safety, health, and physical environment, with 387 occurrences; communication within evaluative relationships, with 372 occurrences; and departmental climate within evaluative relationships, with 217 occurrences.



Office Success Indicators

Office Success Indicators

Program Certification

In May 2026, the Office received notice from the IOA that we were recognized as one of the first five offices to receive the Certified Ombuds Program designation. This recognition reflects our ongoing commitment to serving the UT community with integrity and care. It also formally confirms our operational independence, impartiality, informality, and confidentiality. It certifies that our team possesses proven expertise to assist visitors while serving the organization by raising systemic issues to leadership.

External Recognition

As active members of the professional ombuds community, our staff engaged in several leadership services for the IOA, the ombuds community at large, and for institutional leaders from other organizations. These services are detailed in ***Table 5***.

TABLE 5. STAFF LEADERSHIP SERVICES FOR THE OMBUDS COMMUNITY

	OMBUDS LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES
IOA Leadership	**Lisa Yamagata-Lynch** • IOA Board of Directors (an elected position) • Educational Strategies Point Person (an appointed position) • IOA Certification Board of Director (an appointed position) **Nellie Haddad** • CalCaucus Program Committee Member
Consultations to Other Ombuds and Organizational Leaders	**Lisa Yamagata-Lynch** Provided guidance to several ombuds and leaders from other organizations regarding: (a) starting an ombuds office, (b) developing a charter, (c) managing complex visitor situations, (d) engaging in data collection and analysis while addressing IOA standards of practice, and (e) preparing annual reports.



Our office was recognized by the IOA as a Certified Ombuds Program.

Certification demonstrates our proven expertise in assisting visitors while serving the organization by raising systemic issues to leadership.

Practitioner Research

During FY26, our staff engaged in several peer-reviewed conference presentations at the IOA Annual Conference that was facilitated virtually. The presentations included the following:

- Alam, M. R., & Yamagata-Lynch, L. (2026). *Explaining ombuds with theory*. International Ombuds Association Virtual Conference.
- Thompson, D. & Yamagata-Lynch, L. (2026). *Leveraging educational partnerships as a strategy for building organizational effectiveness*. International Ombuds Association Virtual Conference.
- Yamagata-Lynch, L., & Miller, E. (2026). *Building the nimble ombuds office: Approaching the SOPs from what you can do, introducing concept of affordance in office design and standards of practice application*. International Ombuds Association Virtual Conference.

Educational Programming and Outreach Satisfaction Survey Results

In many of our information sessions and workshops, participants were invited to complete an anonymous satisfaction survey. Participants were provided a QR code that linked to the survey at the end of the session, and a link to the survey was provided in an email sent shortly after our event. The FY26 survey collected 150 responses, including 133 completed surveys. Because respondents were not required to answer every question, and because the survey routed information session and workshop attendees to different rating matrices, the number of responses varies by item and is noted with each result.

Information Session Satisfaction

Information session attendees rated a separate survey. As shown in ***Table 6***, ratings were strongly positive across all four statements. The statements "Attending this intro session was a good use of my time" and "The content was relevant" each received 75% Strongly Agree responses, with no Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses for either statement.

TABLE 6. INFORMATION SESSION SATISFACTION INDICATORS

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Attending this intro session was a good use of my time	36 (75.0%)	10 (20.8%)	2 (4.2%)	0	0
Session activities were engaging	32 (66.7%)	12 (25.0%)	2 (4.2%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)
The content was relevant	36 (75.0%)	10 (20.8%)	2 (4.2%)	0	0
The session was well facilitated	33 (68.8%)	13 (27.1%)	1 (2.1%)	0	1 (2.1%)

***Total responses per statement differ due to missing responses.**

Workshop Satisfaction Results

Using a five-point scale, workshop respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about the 90-minute workshops. As shown in ***Table 7***, responses were overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of responses to every statement being Strongly Agree or Agree. The statement "This session was well facilitated" received the highest share of Strongly Agree responses at 74.5%, followed by the statement "The content was relevant" at 67.4%.

TABLE 7. WORKSHOP SATISFACTION INDICATORS

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Attending this workshop was a good use of my time	58 (61.7%)	22 (23.4%)	3 (3.2%)	6 (6.4%)	5 (5.3%)
The break-out discussions were engaging	46 (48.9%)	35 (37.2%)	6 (6.4%)	2 (2.1%)	5 (5.3%)
The content was relevant	62 (67.4%)	20 (21.7%)	7 (7.6%)	0	3 (3.3%)
The session was well facilitated	70 (74.5%)	11 (11.7%)	7 (7.4%)	3 (3.2%)	3 (3.2%)

***Total responses per statement differ due to missing responses.**

Of the 135 survey respondents, 125 (92.6%) agreed that they would recommend our information sessions or workshops.

Overall Participant Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction ratings were consistently positive. When participants were asked to rate their satisfaction after attending a session or workshop, of the 136 who responded, 123 (90.4%) expressed satisfaction. Of those, 94 respondents (69.1%) reported being very satisfied, and 29 respondents (21.3%) reported being satisfied. Negative responses were limited, with nine participants (6.6%) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, three (2.2%) dissatisfied, and one (0.7%) very dissatisfied.

Recommending to Others

When asked whether they would recommend the information session or workshop to others, participant responses indicated strong confidence in the programming. Of the 135 who responded, 125 (92.6%) agreed, including 103 (76.3%) who strongly agreed and 22 (16.3%) who somewhat agreed. Six respondents (4.4%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and four (3.0%) somewhat disagreed.

Participant Qualitative Comments

In addition to multiple-choice questions in the survey, we asked survey respondents to respond to the question "What did you like about the information session/workshop?" ***Figure 7*** shows four thematized sample responses that represent respondents' overall comments.

Increased Awareness of Ombuds Services

"It was very informative. I had a very limited understanding of what this office did before the session and this helped me have a better idea of the resources offered!"

"I was unaware of the role of the ombuds; I've heard the word, but [am] grateful to understand what the position is and does."

Safe and Engaging Learning Activities

"I really liked the [online tool used] for engagement. It allowed interaction with anonymity."

"The informal format made the session approachable and encouraged me to feel comfortable contacting the ombuds with any questions or concerns moving forward."

"I enjoyed the openness to ask questions, receive feedback, and breakout room practice."

Practical Application and Support for Self-Reflection

"I liked how actionable it was to my everyday life. Helpful to use these frameworks for things that happened in the past."

"I felt like it helped me understand myself better. I think it was also a great reminder of tools that help us reset and reframe mindsets during conflict."

Facilitator Quality and Presenter Effectiveness

"It was easy to follow and stay engaged with the presenter. The lead presenter did a great job bringing the content to life and the co-presenter was great in her contributions as well!"

"The facilitators did such a wonderful job keeping everyone engaged and explaining the information. They were calm and informative even when confronted with differing opinions about assertive communication."

FIGURE 7. SAMPLE PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Similar to previous years, participant comments highlight an appreciation for information about how ombuds service can support them while navigating challenges at the university. Participants appreciated how ombuds workshop presenters were engaging, informative, and created a safe learning environment. Participants particularly appreciated how workshop content was relevant, practical, and provided support for increased or deeper self-reflection.

Visitor Support Services Satisfaction Survey Results

Visitors who scheduled meetings with ombuds through OnceHub were automatically sent to an anonymous visitor satisfaction survey shortly after their meeting. Of the 536 visitor meetings scheduled through OnceHub, 142 visitors responded, for a response rate of 26.5%. Selected highlights are presented in the following section. Because respondents were not required to answer every question, the number of responses varies by item and is noted with each result.

Ombuds Helpfulness

Visitor responses were overwhelmingly positive when they were asked to evaluate the helpfulness of their experience with the ombuds using a five-point scale ranging from Very Helpful to Very Unhelpful. Of the 141 who responded, a total of 137 visitors (97.2%) rated their experience as either Very Helpful or Helpful. The majority of these respondents, 102 (72.3%), rated their experience Very Helpful, while an additional 35 (24.8%) found the services Helpful. There were four respondents who provided Neutral or Unhelpful ratings, including two (1.4%) Neutral, one (0.7%) Unhelpful, and one (0.7%) Very Unhelpful.

Helpful Interactions with the Ombuds

In our survey, visitors were given the option to select multiple answers from a comprehensive list of what they found helpful in their interaction with the ombuds. "Empathetic Listening" and "The Opportunity to Speak with Someone Impartial" tied as the most frequently identified options, each selected by 116 of 137 respondents (84.7%). "The Confidential Nature of Ombuds Services" followed closely behind, identified by 103 visitors (75.2%), along with "Guidance and Suggestions," selected by 100 visitors (73%). "Assistance with Exploring Options" was identified by 86 visitors (62.8%).

A second tier of responses reflects the range of ways visitors use our services: "Assistance Thinking through Complex Issues," 61 visitors (44.5%); "The Opportunity to Vent," 60 visitors (43.8%); "Getting Answers and Information," 59 visitors (43.1%); "Help Preparing for Difficult Conversations," 49 visitors (35.8%); and "Help Clarifying Goals," 47 visitors (34.3%).

Additionally, 38 visitors (27.7%) identified referrals to campus offices and resources as Helpful, and 37 visitors (27.0%) identified help exploring different perspectives as Helpful.

What Visitors Might Have Done without Ombuds Services

We asked visitors to share what actions they might have taken had ombuds services not been available to them. Visitors could select multiple responses. Of the 131 visitors who responded, nearly half, 65 visitors (49.6%), indicated they would have done nothing or tried to wait the situation out, and 53 visitors (40.5%) indicated they would have avoided the situation or the people involved. Additionally, 34 visitors (26.0%) indicated they might have said or done something they would later regret.

Notably, a meaningful share of responses pointed toward outcomes with direct organizational cost. Of these, 33 visitors (25.2%) indicated they "Might have left the university" and 20 visitors (15.3%) indicated they "Might have changed positions or programs within the university." Furthermore, 16 visitors (12.2%) said they "Might have submitted a grievance or formal complaint," seven visitors (5.3%) indicated they "Might have taken legal action," and 26 visitors (19.8%) selected "Other," describing a range of alternative actions. These responses suggest that ombuds services offer visitors a constructive alternative at a decision point where their most likely paths would otherwise be disengagement, avoidance, escalation, or departure.

33 visitors (25.2%) indicated they "Might have left the university" and 20 visitors (15.3%) indicated they "Might have changed positions or programs within the university." Furthermore, 16 visitors (12.2%) said they "Might have submitted a grievance or formal complaint," seven visitors (5.3%) indicated they "Might have taken legal action."

Ombuds Effectiveness

Visitors evaluated ombuds effectiveness across six key service dimensions using a five-point scale from Very Good to Very Poor. As shown in ***Table 8***, results demonstrated strong performance across all areas, with at least 97% of respondents rating every dimension as Very Good or Good. "Treating visitors with kindness and respect" received the highest ratings, with 135 respondents (97.1%) rating this dimension Very Good. "Understanding visitor issues and concerns" followed, with 132 respondents (95.0%) rating it Very Good, and "Explaining information in a way visitors could understand," with 131 respondents (94.2%) rating it Very Good. "Making visitors feel comfortable talking with staff" was rated Very Good by 129 respondents (92.8%), "Providing timely communication and services" by 123 respondents (88.5%), and "Empowering visitors to make informed decisions" by 120 respondents (86.3%). Ratings below Good were rare across all six dimensions.

TABLE 8. VISITOR ASSESSMENT OF OMBUDS EFFECTIVENESS

STATEMENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	ACCEPTABLE	POOR	VERY POOR
Treating me with kindness and respect	133 (97.1%)	3 (2.2%)	0	0	1 (0.7%)
Understanding my issues/ concerns	132 (95.0%)	6 (4.3%)	0	0	1 (0.7%)
Explaining information in a way I could understand	131 (94.2%)	6 (4.3%)	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)
Making me feel comfortable talking with them	129 (92.8%)	8 (5.8%)	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)
Providing timely communication/services	123 (88.5%)	14 (10.1%)	1 (0.7%)	0	1 (0.7%)
Empowering me to make informed decisions	120 (86.3%)	16 (11.5%)	2 (1.4%)	0	1 (0.7%)

***Total number of responses to each service dimension are not equal due to missing responses.**

Overall Visitor Satisfaction with Ombuds

Overall satisfaction ratings were consistently positive throughout the survey. When visitors were asked to rate the level of satisfaction from their most recent experience with ombuds, of the 137 who responded, 136 visitors (99.3%) expressed satisfaction. Of these, the majority of satisfied visitors, 110 respondents (80.3%), reported being Very Satisfied with their experience, while 26 (19.0%) indicated they were Satisfied. One visitor (0.7%) reported being Very Dissatisfied, and no visitors selected Neutral or Dissatisfied.

Recommending Ombuds to Others

When asked whether they were likely to recommend ombuds services to others, visitor responses indicated a strong confidence in the program. Of the responses, 136 out of 137 respondents (99.3%) Agree that they would recommend the Office of Ombuds services to others. The majority of these, 124 (90.5%), Strongly Agreed, while 12 visitors (8.8%) Agreed. One visitor (0.7%) Strongly Disagreed, and no visitors selected Neutral or Disagreed.

Visitor Qualitative Comments

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, we asked visitors to provide comments about their experiences working with the ombuds. ***Figure 8*** lists visitor comments that best represent common themes in visitor experiences.

Visitors commented that the ombuds were approachable and helped them see their situations from different perspectives.

Sense of Safety, Empathy, and Being Heard

"[The ombuds] was empathetic and encouraging. She helped me view the situation from an unbiased perspective and gave me advice I needed to hear."

"[The ombuds] was so kind and made me feel safe and heard… I will 100% be recommending people in and outside of my department to talk to her."

"I am so grateful to be heard! Coming into work this morning was better than it's been in a long time."

Practical Guidance, Resources, and Next Steps

"My conversation was very beneficial to me. It helped me think about my next steps regarding my issue and how to communicate that issue to the proper people in a professional way… Having an impartial person to take a look with me through it all was very helpful and greatly appreciated."

"[The ombuds'] knowledge of the university system and preparation for a meeting thinking through the options was helpful."

"She was able to provide helpful university contacts and an opportunity to vent about the issues."

Opportunity for New Perspectives and Reframing

"Thank you all so much! You all helped me see a range of possibilities in addressing the issue that I had not considered. Thank you for helping me consider the roles of fairness and care and for helping me develop language for those pathways."

"I always find ombuds to be worth the time. This group challenges you to see other perspectives and is resolution-oriented, which I greatly appreciate."

"It was very helpful to discuss employer-employee difficulties with someone from an outside perspective to see what I might be able to do to allow me to move forward successfully."

Opportunity for New Perspectives and Reframing

"The feeling of calm and control that I left with vs chaotic energy/panic I entered with was very meaningful."

"I was pleased that [the ombuds] seemed to understand the complex situation right away and gave practical advice immediately. We are just starting the process of working out an issue and I feel less dread about it."

FIGURE 8. SELECTED VISITOR COMMENTS

Visitor comments highlighted that ombuds services provide a confidential and impartial space to engage in conversation and safely explore options with a person at the university. Visitors commented that the ombuds were approachable and helped them see their situations from different perspectives. This introduced some calm to the situation that felt chaotic before meeting the ombuds.



Focus for FY27

Ombuds Area of Focus for FY27

Reflecting on FY26 data and findings, our FY27 focus areas remain very similar to FY26 with updates. These focus areas include:

1. Awareness Building

Continue to engage in education and outreach to help constituents reframe their perceptions of tension and uncertainty.

2. Supporting Organizational Change

Continue providing education, consultation, and coaching services to help individuals *and* teams foster growth mindset for flexibility and resilience.

3. Collaborative Partnerships

Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with formal offices to support individuals *and* teams in navigating challenges.

Data Collection and Analysis Methodology

Maintaining Confidentiality in Ombuds Data Collection and Analyses

Ombuds staff identified quantitative metrics and qualitative themes to examine visitor experiences while relying on Stake's (2010) knowledge framework for statistical and professional/clinical knowledge. The ethical and practical commitments to independence and confidentiality in the IOA Standards of Practice does not allow ombuds to follow traditional methodologies for research (Yamagata-Lynch, 2024). Therefore, while protecting these commitments, the strategies listed below were put into place for data collection and analysis related to our services.

- When collecting statistical data, we do not track individuals through multiple months, and instead simply count the number of visitors to the office per month.
- When collecting and analyzing qualitative data, we do not create in-depth records.
- When collecting both quantitative and qualitative data we do not associate data with information that would reveal individual identity.

When collecting both quantitative and qualitative data we do not associate data with information that would reveal individual identity.

Ombuds staff relied on several digital research tools for collecting and analyzing non-identifiable data. Airtable, a cloud-based service, was used as the quantitative database platform for data entry and aggregate analysis of educational programming, outreach, and visitor traffic trends. Qualtrics, a cloud-based service, was used for collecting and analyzing data for both our educational programming participant satisfaction survey and the visitor satisfaction survey. Dedoose, a cloud-based service, was used for qualitative data entry and analysis of visitor conversational narratives. All of these cloud-based data collection and analysis services followed the Ombuds Data Security Plan.

Coding of visitor narratives followed the Constant Comparative Methodology (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2014) to identify themes that emerged as well as the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories (Dale, Ganci, Miller, & Sebok, 2008). The codes that emerged from the FY25 analysis were carried forward to FY26. Former codes that showed less applicability during analysis were eliminated. Throughout the year, ombuds staff debriefed as a team to observe themes and trends in both educational programming and visitor services.

While engaging in thematic analysis of visitor experiences, ombuds staff treated the narratives that visitors shared each time they contacted the ombuds as a unique data point and treated narratives as a form of public engagement of interpretations and negotiations of public meanings (Bruner, 1990). Details of each visitor narrative were not recorded, rather ombuds staff coded meaning shared in conversations with visitors soon after meeting with them. Ombuds staff approached shared meaning as a social interaction between ombuds and visitors that brought shape and form to ideas for ongoing dialogue about their shared reality (Bruner, 2002). Thematic analysis took place with the assumption that people make meaning of and understand their lives through narratives and understanding these narratives can provide a window into how individuals understand their world (Kim, 2016).

Trustworthiness and Rigor in Ombuds Reporting

Ombuds staff relied on trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and rigor (Tracy, 2010) as theoretical constructs in qualitative research to strengthen the credibility of findings. Following recommendations by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Tracy (2010), ombuds staff attempted to maintain trustworthiness and rigor through the following practices:

- involving multiple staff in data collection, analysis, and identification of findings;
- reporting on worthwhile ideas;
- presenting theory and methods;
- being systematic;
- being reflexive;
- presenting participant and visitor world views;
- addressing subjectivity;
- being humble while making conclusions;
- being transparent about methodological challenges; and
- collecting data from multiple sources.



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