

ANNUAL REPORT
2013/2014 ACADEMIC YEAR
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2013/2014 academic year coincided with the appointment of a new University Ombudsperson, Kevin Coonrod, for Auburn University.

Mr. Coonrod has attempted to maintain the services of the Office of the Ombudsperson under the same guidelines and standards of practice as have been in place since the office was created. This report will set forth a brief history of the Ombuds office, a description of the role of the Ombuds on campus, a statistical report concerning constituencies and services provided, and a summary of marketing efforts and professional improvements to self and the office.

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF OFFICE

The Office of the Ombudsperson of Auburn University began serving as a confidential, neutral, independent and informal resource for faculty, staff and Administrative and Professional employees on September 2, 2008. The founding Ombudsperson was Dr. James Wohl, who established the office in accordance with the principals of the International Ombudsperson Association.

In October 2011, the Ombuds Office opened to the student populace – both undergraduate and graduate. The office now serves all employees and students at Auburn University.

Ombuds Wohl departed in the spring of 2013, and retired Alabama Circuit Court Judge Howard Brian maintained the office as Interim Ombudsperson until the end of August that year. The author of this report began his employment as University Ombudsperson just after the commencement of the 2013/2014 Academic Year, on

September 1, 2013. Laura Kloberg has been the assistant to the Ombudsperson since the office's inception in 2008.

III. NATURE OF OFFICE

The purpose of the Office of the Ombudsperson is to assist Auburn University faculty, A & P and staff members, and graduate and undergraduate students navigate through troubled situations they encounter at the University. The Ombuds is a neutral third party who encourages and facilitates the resolution of conflicts without him or herself imposing a settlement. A goal in every case is to help people go beyond settling disputes to actually resolving their underlying conflict.

The Office of the Ombudsperson operates under the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practices of the International Ombudsman Association ("IOA"). The foundational principles of the office are Independence, Neutrality, Confidentiality and Informality.

Ombudsperson Kevin Coonrod is a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner ® through the IOA and a member of the Alabama State Court Mediator Roster. The Ombuds office provides conflict resolution services, advice on campus policy and submits trend reports containing non-confidential information to the administration. Use of the office is voluntary and no person can be retaliated against for visiting the office or declining to visit the office.

Due to its independent, neutral, confidential and informal role, there are many functions the Office of the Ombudsperson does not fulfill. The Ombuds is not a member of the administration or any part of the University hierarchy. As such, the Ombuds has no authority to determine whether a person or policy is right or wrong, create policy, give legal advice or therapy, participate in grievance proceedings or other formal processes, or advocate for any party or entity.

Finally, the Ombuds is not an agent of notice of the University. The Ombuds can refer office visitors to experts or persons in authority to address issues that are beyond the scope of the Ombuds' services, and can guide visitors to appropriate offices for filing complaints or grievances.

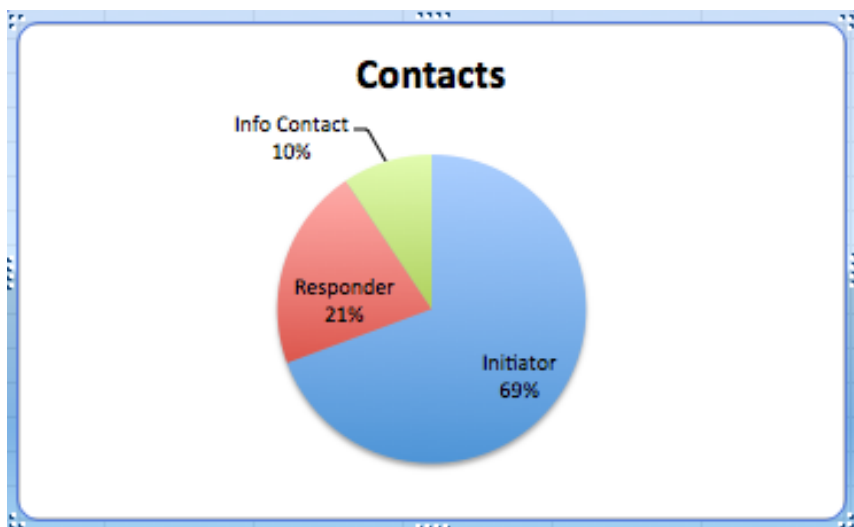
IV. REPORT

A) Introduction This report contains statistics compiled from September 1, 2013 through August 17, 2014. The statistical database was modified during this time to track all visitors to the office. For purposes of this report, an “office visitor” is defined as an individual who participates in a discussion of a situation through the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Office visitors are categorized as either “initiators” or “responders” and all are accorded an equal promise of confidentiality when working with the Ombudsperson. An “initiator” is a person who first brings a complaint or issue to the Ombuds. “Responders” are those individuals who agree to participate in a voluntary process after being contacted by the Ombuds with an offer to assist with the situation raised by the initiator. The database has also been revised to track the number of informational contacts approached by the Ombuds.

B) Statistical Data Pertaining to Office Visitors and Contact Information Personnel

This section sets forth statistical information regarding the persons the Ombudsperson worked with on ombuds matters during the 2013/2014 academic year. The categories are based on the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories, a copy of which is attached to this report.

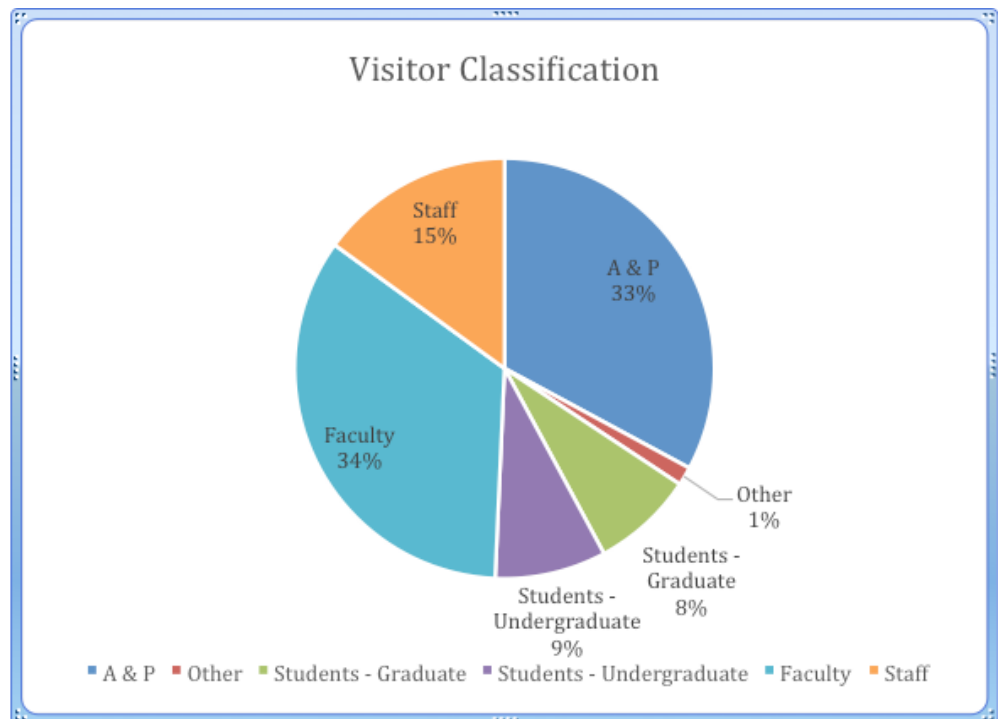


Office Contacts

During the 2013/2014 Academic Year, the Ombuds worked with 183 office visitors. The visitors were comprised of 140 initiators and 43 responders. Additionally the Ombuds consulted with 19 people, seeking information on Auburn University policy and customs.

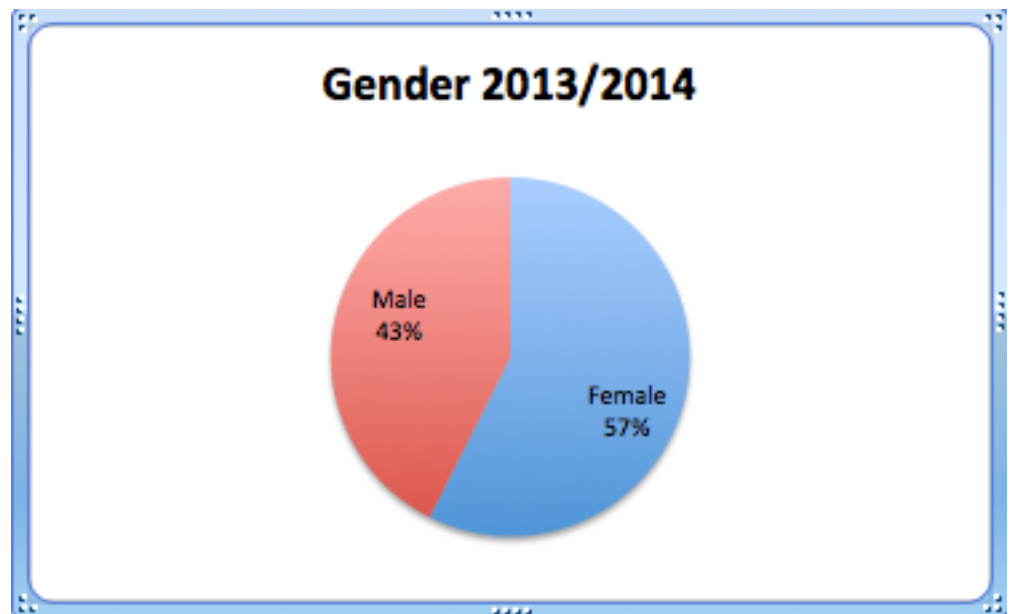
Visitor Classification

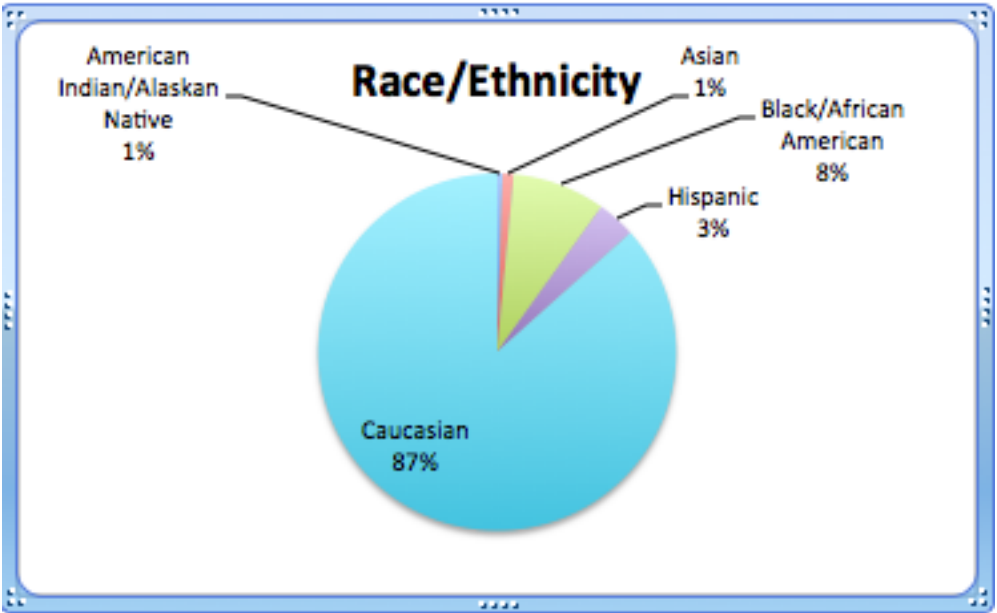
- Faculty: 48
- A & P : 46
- Students: 23
- Staff: 21
- Other: 2
- Total: 140



Gender

Female: 116
Male: 86





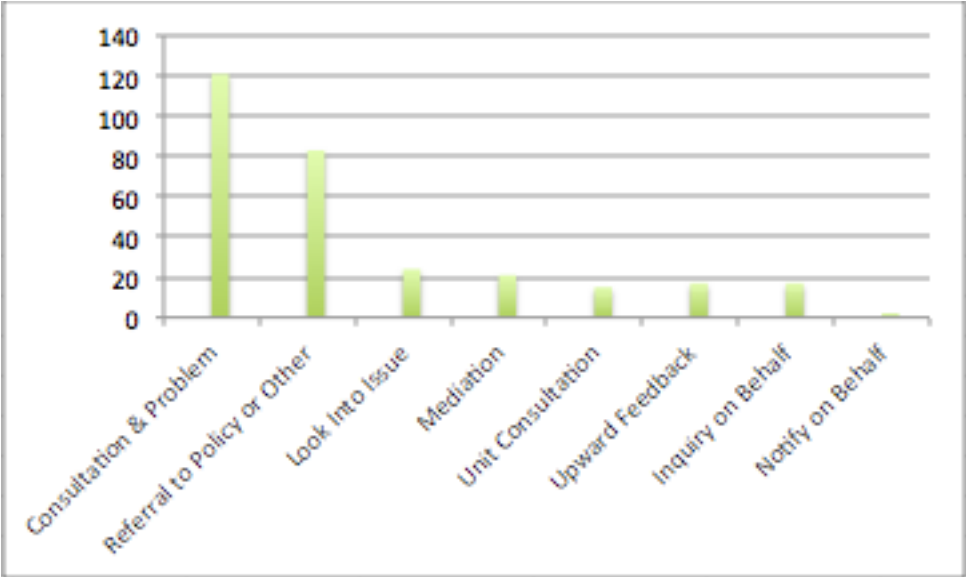
Race

American Indian: 1
 Asian: 2
 Black/African American: 17
 Hispanic: 7
 Caucasian: 175

Ombuds Services

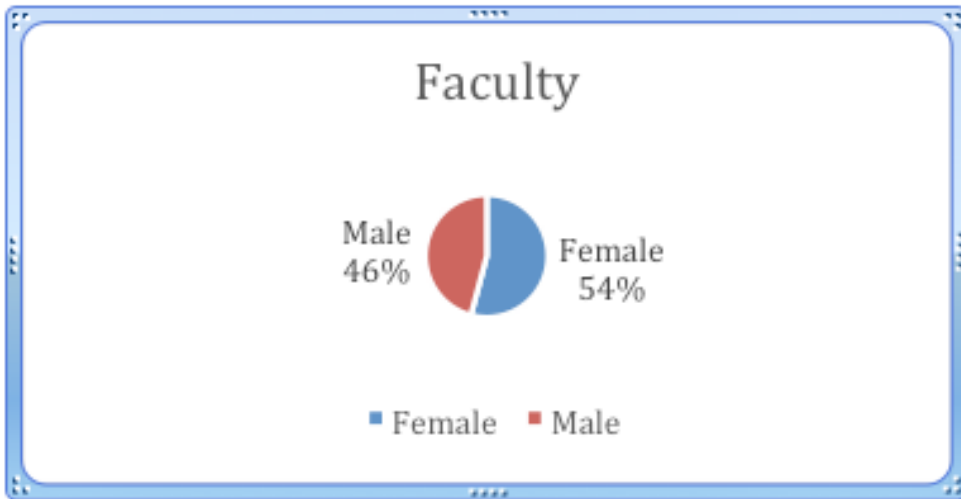
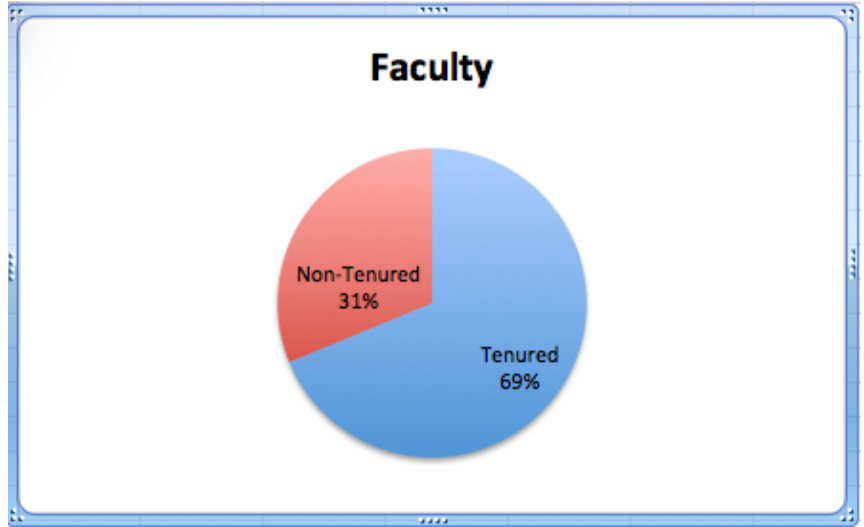
Consultation and problem solving:	121
Referral to policy or other office:	83
Look into issue:	24
Mediation:	21
Unit Consultation:	15
Upward feedback:	17
Inquiry on behalf:	17
Notify on behalf:	2

Total Ombuds Responses: 300



Faculty

Tenured: 33
Non-tenured: 15

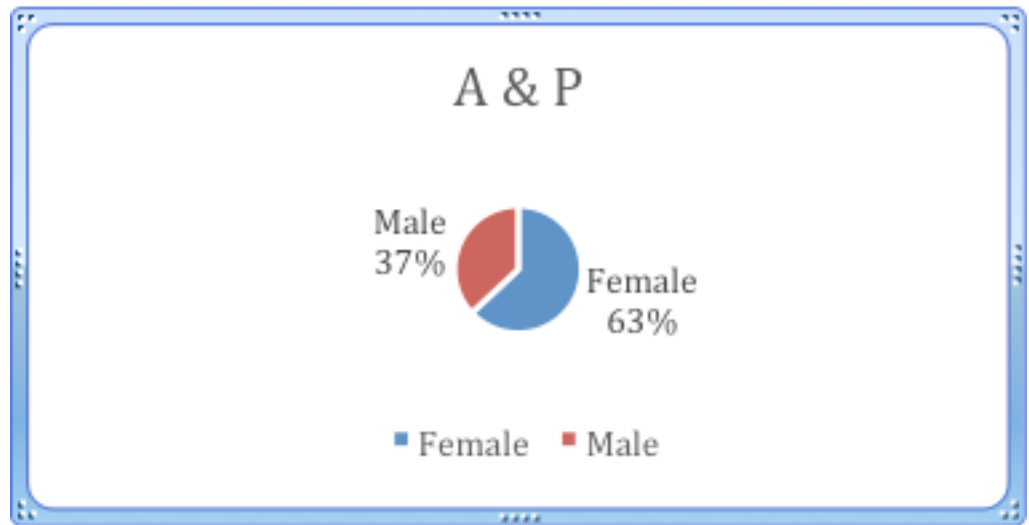


Faculty Gender

Female: 26
Male: 22

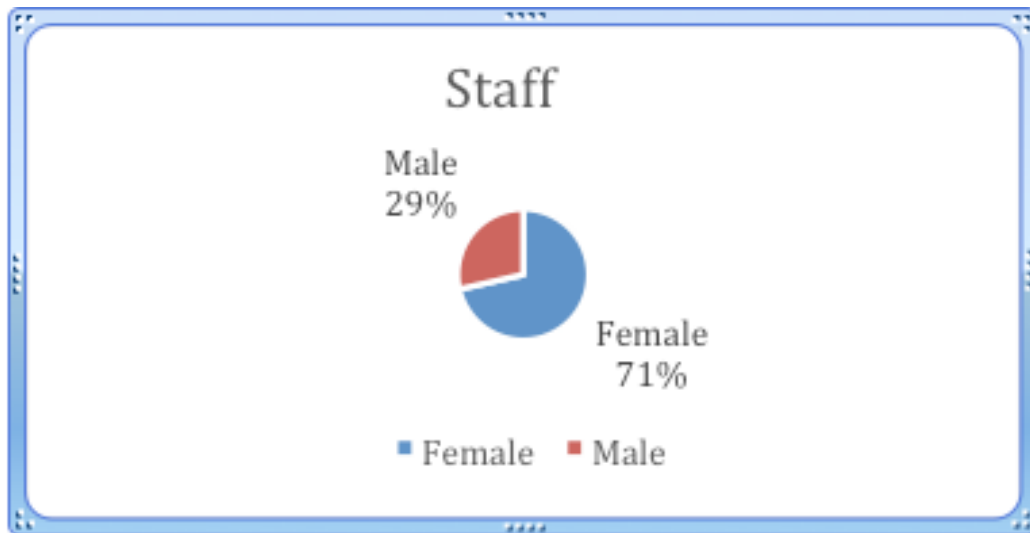
A & P Gender

Female: 29
Male: 17

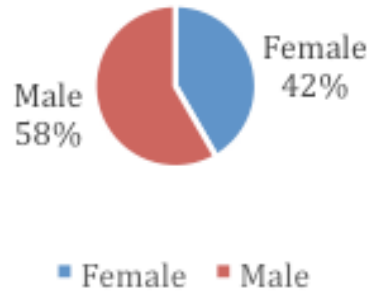


Staff Gender

Female: 15
Male: 6



Undergraduate Students



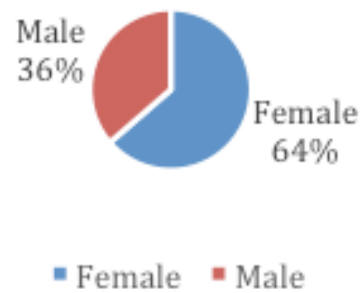
Undergraduates

Male: 7
Female: 5

Graduate Students

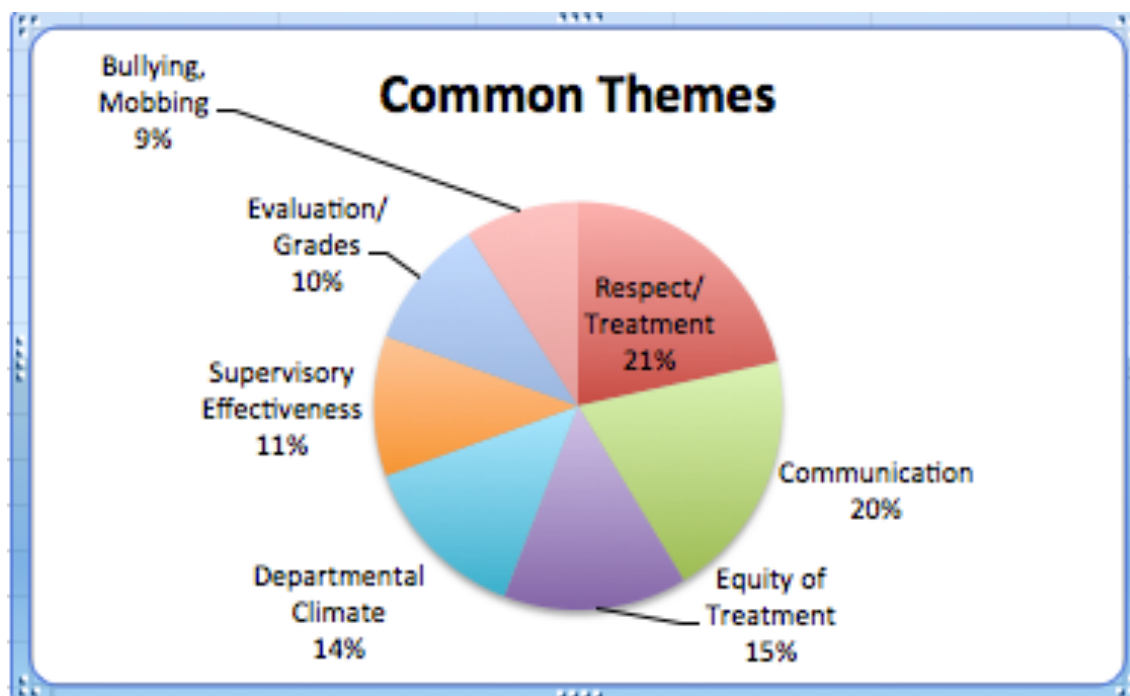
Female: 7
Male: 4

Graduate Students





Summary Report	
Issue	Total
Compensation & Benefits	13
Evaluative Relationships	86
Peer and Colleague Relationships	33
Career Progression and Development	42
Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	14
Safety, Health, and Physical Environment	11
Services/Administrative Issues	4
Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related	14
Values, Ethics, and Standards	37
Total	254



Common Themes

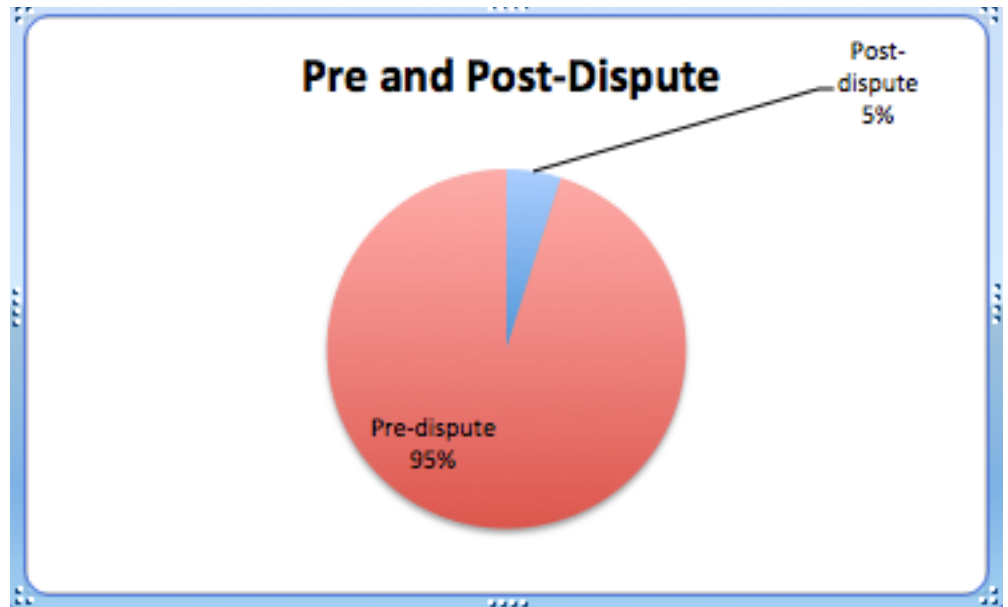
The seven top common themes underlying complaints made by office visitors all related to human interrelationship issues, with the exception of grading disputes.

Respect/Treatment:	62
Communication:	57
Equity of Treatment:	42
Departmental Climate:	39
Supervisory Effectiveness:	32
Evaluation/Grades:	30
Bullying, Mobbing:	26

Dispute Status

Pre-dispute: 116

Post-dispute: 6



The Ombudsperson is not involved during formal processes such as grievance hearings. However, the Ombuds is available after formal process have concluded, and can be useful in assisting the parties repair relationships and work toward productive, respectful and collaborative working associations.

C) Outreach The Ombuds responds to and encourages all invitations to inform groups and individuals about the role and functions of the office. Continuous marketing is necessary to reach all members of the Auburn University community. Speaking presentations during 2013/2014 were made to the following groups:

- Provost's Council
- President's Administrative Council
- Faculty Senate
- Graduate Student Council
- International Students' Social Hour
- President's Cabinet, Student Government Association
- Student Senate
- Success Strategies, UNIV 1100
- A & P Council
- Department of Athletics
- Associate Provost's Retreat

- Staff Council
- Industrial and Graphic Design
- Facilities Management Supervisors
- A & P Welfare Committee
- Student Counseling Services
- Multi-Cultural Diversity Commission
- Division of Student Affairs Expanded Directors Meeting
- International Students' Orientation

D) Professional Conferences Attended Continuing education, discussions of issues and concerns with fellow ombudspersons and “charging the batteries” contribute to an ongoing goal of continuous improvement as a person and ombuds. Major conferences attended during the 2013/2014 academic year were:

- **California Caucus of College and University Ombudsman**, Pacific Grove, California
- **International Ombudsman Association**, Denver, Colorado
 - Presented half-day workshop entitled *Identifying Underlying Interests: Tips from Nature, History and the Cinema*
- **Anti-Bullying Summit**, Peachtree City, Georgia

E) Departmental Retreat and Group Facilitation A day-long retreat involving 52 members of an academic department was held after meetings with seven stakeholder groups were conducted. This retreat is only counted in the above statistics as having one initiator and one responder, as it was a group project.

F) Sound Mitigation System The Ombuds physical office underwent a significant upgrade during this academic year when a sound mitigation system was installed throughout the Ombuds' suite of offices. This system is comprised of volume-controlled speakers emitting white noise, and transducers to break up the sound waves of spoken words. This system allows for conversations and mediations to be held without statements being heard outside of the particular meeting room, and is an important component of the Ombuds' pledge to keep conversations confidential.

V. CONCLUSION

The 2013/2014 academic year was a challenging, productive, engaging and enjoyable time for the author of this report, Ombuds Kevin Coonrod. During this period, the Ombuds met with 183 office visitors in attempts to improve their situations at Auburn University. The new Ombudsperson has become known to University, Staff, A & P and Student leadership, as well as numerous members of their constituencies.

Goals for the 2014/2015 academic year and beyond include continuing to market the Office of the Ombudsperson to as many members of the Auburn community as possible, expanding the number of office visitors served, and continued education regarding the policies and customs of Auburn University.