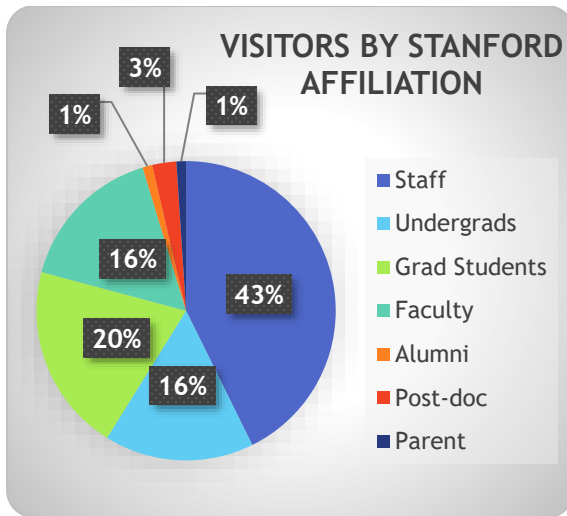
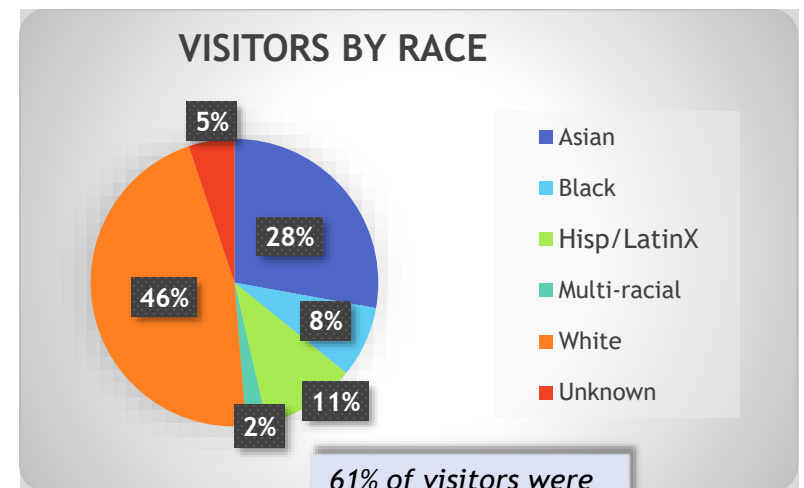
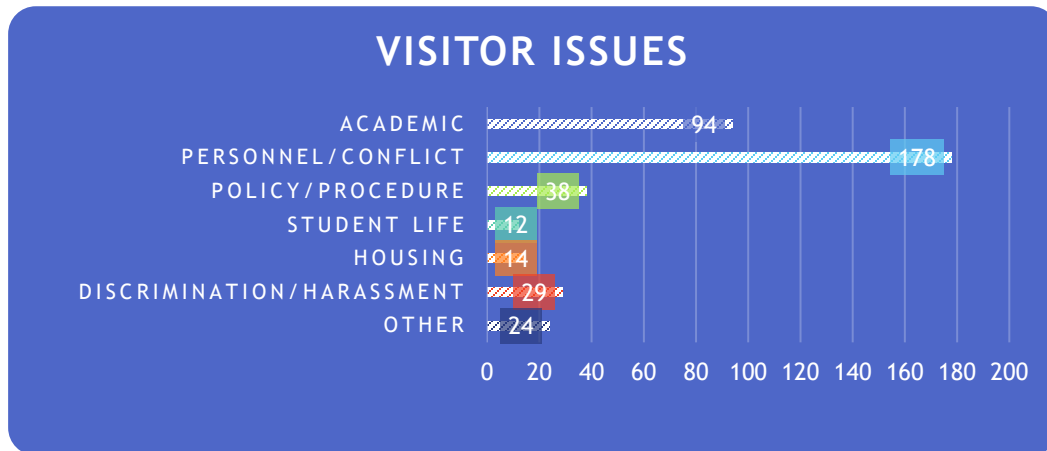


The Ombuds Office is a resource for Stanford students, faculty, staff and postdocs who are experiencing an issue or conflict that is impacting their academic or work life. Visitors generally schedule individual meetings with the Ombuds during which they may receive information on policies, referrals to other resources and/or coaching on options to manage their situation. *The office adheres to ethical standards ensuring confidentiality, impartiality, independence and informality.*



Ombuds Services for AY 2022-23 included:

- Individual meetings with **389 visitors** (87% of visitors met only once regarding their issue. 25% of visitors had used the office before for assistance on another issue).
- Mediated conversations to resolve interpersonal conflict.
- Workshops and trainings on conflict navigation for **450** faculty, staff and students.
- Confidential consultations & coaching for faculty, staff and student groups on how to manage conflicts or issues in their groups.
- Confidential surveys and interviews assessing lab and workgroup cultures, with a report summarizing findings & providing feedback to leadership.
- Facilitating group discussions on norms and values.



61% of visitors were Female & 37% Male

Staff

- Conflict with manager & unfair treatment
- Compensation & pay equity issues
- Discrimination, harassment & microaggressions

One third of staff issues related to conflicts with their manager, including micromanagement, unfair treatment and hostile or “psychologically unsafe” working environments. Thirteen percent (13%) of staff raised concerns about compensation and pay equity; 12% raised concerns of discrimination, harassment and microaggressions. Other frequent issues were conflicts with colleagues, terminations, concerns about performance appraisals and general policy questions. Managers also reached out regarding conflicts occurring between them & staff they supervised.

Faculty

- Conflict with faculty colleague
- Conflict with student
- Consultation regarding Stanford policy or how to manage conflict in their work group

Seventeen percent (17%) of the issues related to conflicts with faculty colleagues, 12% related to conflicts with their graduate students and another 12% of faculty sought general advice on how to manage conflicts occurring in their labs. Other common issues were questions about Title IX; tenure and reappointment issues; housing and benefit issues, and concerns regarding discrimination.

Undergrads

- Grade grievances
- OCS & Honor code issues
- Housing issues

Twenty-four percent (24%) of undergrads visited due to concerns about grades; 21% with questions about OCS processes and 16% with housing issues. Overall, visits from undergrads were down 38% from last year, largely due to a decrease in students seeking information on OCS-related issues (which comprised almost 35% of the AY 2021-22 undergraduate visitors and 21% of the AY 2022-23 visitors).

Grad Students

- Conflict with faculty (generally advisor)
- Academic issues (dismissal, graduation or grade issue)
- OCS & funding issues

Conflicts with faculty, in most cases the graduate student’s advisor, accounted for 28% of the visitors, with another 28% coming due to other academic issues (grade dispute, program dismissal). Funding issues, OCS concerns, Title IX questions, housing issues and concerns of harassment and discrimination were also raised as common concerns.

Postdocs

- Conflict with student or staff member
- Conflict with faculty member
- Policy question

Since most **postdoctoral students** are in the School of Medicine (served by a separate Ombuds office) they accounted for only 2% of the visitors to the office. Postdoc issues were primarily related to conflicts with others in their lab settings (both students and faculty) with a few visiting with questions regarding Stanford policy.

Above are the top three issues by group. Overall, interpersonal conflict, lack of respect, concerns regarding procedural fairness and difficult working environments were common themes among visitors this past year. Visitors to the office also often expressed frustration regarding the perceived lack of transparency and fairness when their concerns were raised through formal channels. Staff visitors also seemed to be experiencing a high-level of burnout, and increasingly, academic staff, regular staff and graduate students have been expressing more concerns about the high cost-of-living, pay issues and pay equity.

Observations:

Following are some suggestions based on general themes which I observed in my meetings with visitors.

Consider the feasibility of more regular solicitation of “upward” feedback regarding management performance and workplace climate. A third of staff visitors to the Ombuds expressed concerns about alleged unfair and hostile treatment by their managers -- treatment and issues that they often stated had been longstanding. Having a mechanism for staff to provide more routinized feedback about their treatment and work environment, outside of a formal complaint process, might allow earlier identification of workplace climate and leadership issues, so that resources and support could be provided to managers and work teams that are struggling.

Consider providing more management training opportunities for new faculty and staff managers. For faculty, training might address issues related to establishing a lab (policies, lab manual) and supervising students and staff. This might be followed up with a mentorship program for continued coaching and support. For new staff managers, having some type of management “boot camp,” or exploring the feasibility of expanding the [Stanford Manager Academy](#) or offering an abbreviated version for all new managers.

Consider providing conflict management skills training as an integral part of onboarding for all new managers and faculty. Improved conflict competence might allow faculty and managers to intervene more quickly when issues arise, including addressing interpersonal conflicts, disrespectful conduct and concerns of harassment and discrimination.

More transparency around formal resolution processes. Some formal processes don’t provide much information on how they are conducted, leading to “institutional betrayal” when there is a perceived disconnect between the outcomes of those processes and our professed values. More transparency, including clearly published timelines, and as much as practicable, when findings are made, a clear explanation of the findings and rationale, all would be helpful to ameliorate concerns raised by visitors about the trustworthiness of these processes.

For more information about the services of the Stanford University Ombuds Office please see: ombuds.stanford.edu.

To schedule a consultation, appointment or training please email: ombuds@stanford.edu or call 650.497.1542.

Campus Location: Kingscote Gardens, 419 Lagunita Drive, Room 302.

