2021-2022 Ombuds Visitors Served (N=769 people)

- 1%
- 5%
- 5%
- 35%
- 27%
- 28%

- ■ Staff (N=266)
- ■ Faculty (N=216)
- ■ Manager and Supervisor (N=206)
- ■ Trainee* (N=39)
- ■ Student** (N=36)
- Other (N=6)

* Trainee includes Postdocs, Residents and Fellows
** Student includes Students and Graduate Students
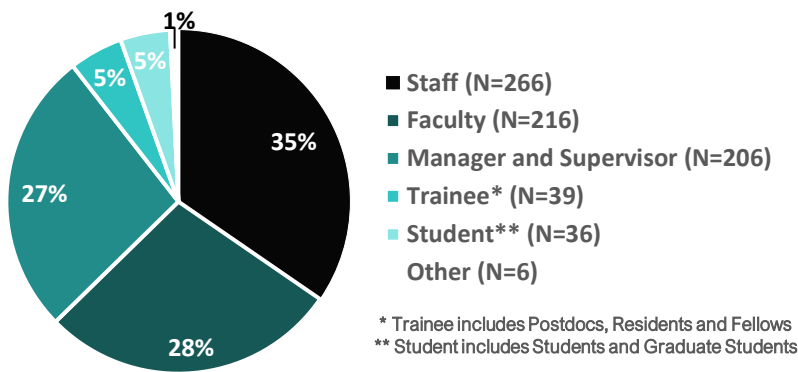
All Visitor Concerns: Main Categories

- 4%
- 5%
- 9%
- 34%
- 20%
- 29%

- ■ Interpersonal Issues
- ■ Structural/Workplace Issues
- ■ Power Issues
- ■ Policy/Code of Conduct
- ■ COVID-19/Other
- ■ Formal Processes
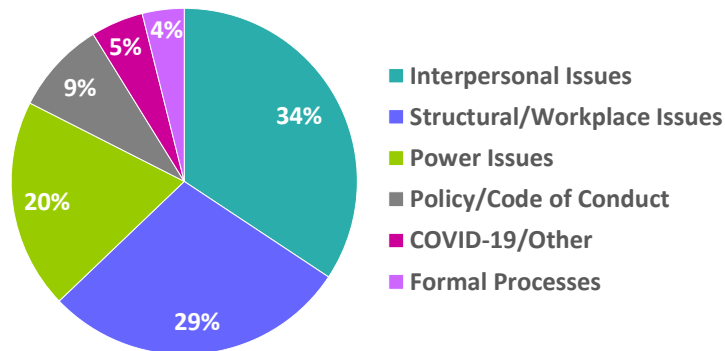
Year	2020-21		2021-22	
Service	Number	Served	Number	Served
Ombuds	619	619	769	769
Mediation, Group facilitation	69	419	66	414
Trainings	64	1,608	38	1,103

Mission: To humanize the experience of working and learning at UCSF by providing a confidential, neutral, informal, and independent problem-solving resource that includes individual consultation, mediation, and group facilitation services to members of the diverse UCSF community predicated on the principles of fairness, equity, and respect.
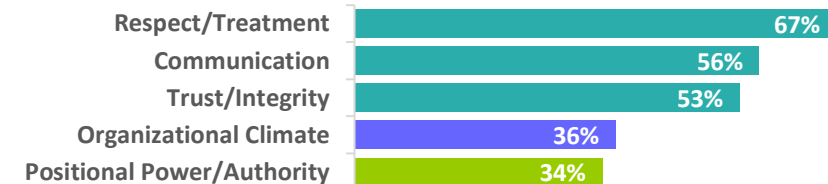
Visitor-Expressed Risks (N=961 risks)

Risk	Total
Loss of department productivity due to pervasive conflict	245
Potential for internal/external grievances	211
Unwarranted attrition/transfer	202
Violation of policy/Code of Conduct	167
Negative publicity	66
High-risk safety issue	45
Litigation potential	25

These are the risks that visitors expressly state. Of 769 Ombuds visitors, 63% identified at least one associated risk. Unresolved conflict creates both risk and cost.

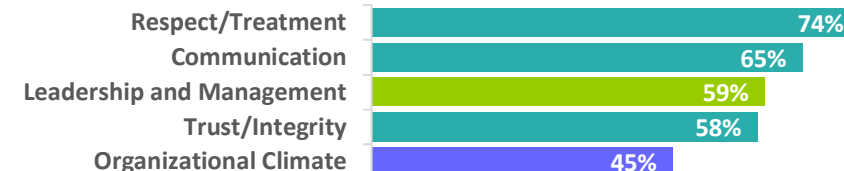## All Visitor Concerns: Top 10 Subcategories (N=769 people)

- Respect/Treatment — 68%
- Communication — 61%
- Trust/Integrity — 53%
- Leadership and Management — 43%
- Organizational Climate — 41%
- Role Clarity — 35%
- COVID-19 — 34%
- Fairness — 31%
- PRIDE — 31%
- Work Style — 30%
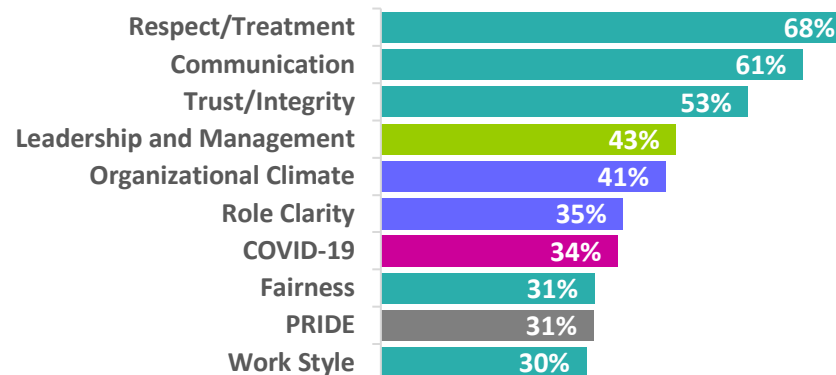
Top 5 Faculty Concerns (N=216 people)

- Respect/Treatment — 67%
- Communication — 56%
- Trust/Integrity — 53%
- Organizational Climate — 36%
- Positional Power/Authority — 34%

This chart reflects concerns reported by faculty members. Additionally, we also note when a visitor's concerns involve a faculty member (i.e. they are in conflict with a faculty member) whether or not the faculty member uses Ombuds services. While faculty members constituted 28% (216) of our visitors, 44% of total cases involved faculty.
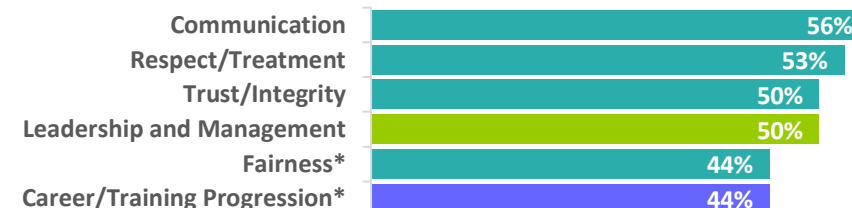
Top 5 Staff Concerns (N=266 people)

- Respect/Treatment — 74%
- Communication — 65%
- Leadership and Management — 59%
- Trust/Integrity — 58%
- Organizational Climate — 45%

Top 5 Manager and Supervisor Concerns (N=206 people)

- Respect/Treatment — 67%
- Communication — 64%
- Trust/Integrity — 50%
- Organizational Climate — 46%
- COVID19 — 41%

Top 5 Postdoc, Resident and Fellow Concerns (N=39 people)

- Respect/Treatment — 62%
- Communication — 51%
- Leadership and Management — 46%
- Trust/Integrity — 38%
- Career/Training Progression — 38%

Top 5 Student and Graduate Student Concerns (N=36 people)

- Communication — 56%
- Respect/Treatment — 53%
- Trust/Integrity — 50%
- Leadership and Management — 50%
- Fairness* — 44%
- Career/Training Progression* — 44%

*these concerns are tied.

Themes

In this second full year of working in a COVID-impacted environment, the strain has continued to challenge the UCSF community. Interpersonal concerns continue to predominate, followed by concerns regarding structural issues and abuse of power. Notably, the Ombuds Office saw a 24% increase in cases over 2020-21 (769 vs. 619). Nearly half (44%) of Ombuds visitors described experiences of abusive interactions. While concerns remain consistent over time, three themes were significant in their contribution to complex case dynamics: burnout, experiences of discrimination, and procedural fairness. These themes are consistent with Gallup survey results where burnout was expressed by 39% of the respondents, and experiences of engagement differed by racial identification and disability status. The challenges were amplified by concerns that the formal options weren't transparently or fairly applied.

Burnout

In our in-depth work, burnout was described as a result of significantly increased workload or expanded job description, expectations for same or increased productivity with fewer staff, lack of manager or supervisor support, and pressure to regularly work greatly extended hours to complete tasks. The stress contributed to loss of productivity (32%) and attrition or transfer (26%), undermining units' ability to address the workload. Burnout increases incivility.

Discrimination

Experiences of racism and other forms of harassment or discrimination remained steady in the proportion of Ombuds visitors. Conflicts with a discrimination component contributed to 29% of the conflicts by Ombuds visitors (N=221). These concerns place Discrimination based on protected class as 11th of the top concerns expressed by Ombuds visitors.

Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness not only refers to the *outcome* of a formal process, but also to the *experience* of engaging in grievances or disciplinary actions. Ombuds visitors were both supervisors and direct reports in disciplinary actions, and complainants and respondents engaged in formal investigations. Visitors expressed frustrations and confusion regarding the lack of information, responsiveness, perceived fairness, equitable treatment, or inclusion of their perspective in the process. While our work focuses on informal options for addressing conflict, as a neutral resource, the Ombuds is also a resource to assist members of the UCSF community to identify and navigate formal options and to provide upward feedback about systemic issues.

Recommendations

Structural Responses to Burnout

Burnout response cannot be limited to self-care recommendations and resources.* Burnout is experienced not only at an individual level but is expressed interpersonally and can take a toll on a team or unit. Structural interventions could include increased staffing, revised job descriptions, stipends where job responsibilities increase significantly, and transparent and inclusive planning for addressing workforce limitations and increased workload. We recognize that many of the top concerns we hear in our work are all exacerbated when people are working at their limit and experiencing burnout.

Conflict Management Skills-Building for Managers

An intervention that can reduce burnout and the abusive behavior that leads to complaints and grievances is an investment in conflict de-escalation skills for supervisors and managers. Local leaders need to be equipped to address behaviors that violate the PRIDE Principles. A conflict-competent manager can build trust and improve morale.

Additionally, managers need skills for addressing discrimination and bias within teams. Conflict competence can be built through providing coaches, mentors, and skills-building sessions. Local use of de-escalation skills could reduce reliance on formal processes. At the same time, improved formal processes would support managers who rely on equitable and timely responses to situations that require a formal response.

Procedural Fairness

"Institutional betrayal" describes the gap between high level stated commitments and on-the-ground lived experiences. Witnesses within a team seeing the extended timelines, perceived inequitable consequences and apparent favoritism often experience decreased morale and loss of faith in institutional fairness. To address concerns about procedural fairness, UCSF can increase resources for units conducting formal processes, as those working in these units can also face increased workload and burnout. Additional suggestions include increased transparency regarding formal engagement processes, timelines, implications and clear reasons for decisions of findings/no findings, appeals options, and robust protections from retaliation. While many of these are outlined in policies and written communication regarding an investigation, questions and concerns regarding procedures and procedural fairness continue to be expressed.

Increased conflict competence, skills to address discrimination and abusive behavior, transparency in accountability systems, and meaningful institutional responses to structural contributors to burnout can improve retention, engagement, and outcomes at all levels at UCSF. UCSF is committed to the PRIDE Principles, and this commitment should and can be experienced by all faculty, staff, and trainees across UCSF.

*McKinsey Health Institute (2022, May 27) *Addressing Employee Burnout: Are You Solving the Right Problem?*