

Consulting the Ombuds



Visitor Information

From January 1, 2015 December 31, 2015, the MCW Ombuds Office logged 157 initial visits by single individuals or groups of individuals. Repeat visits by individuals/ groups for the same issues are not counted in the number reported above, and the numbers do not include individuals or

offices consulted by the Ombuds as a result of discussions with visitors to the Office.

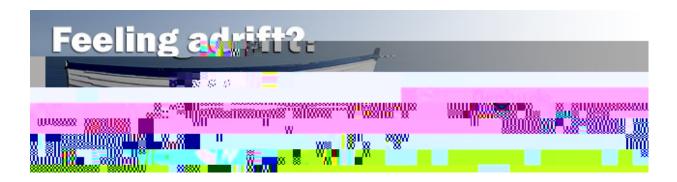
Of the 157 initial visits, 82 (52.2%) were by faculty, 68 (43.5%) were

groups to the Ombuds were employed in MCW clinical departments (69.2%), centers/institutes (9.0%), administrative units (12.8%) and basic science departments (3.8%).

visits noted above also include 33 exit interviews with faculty. Exit interviews are offered to faculty who are retiring, have elected to leave for career advancement or personal reasons, or have not had their MCW contracts extended. Most visitors to the Ombuds Office reported having benefited from our services.

The issues and/ or concerns raised by visitors to the MCW Ombuds Office are detailed in **Table 1**. The most common reasons people

that is, relationships with either supervisors or



supervisees. The second most common category of issues concerned

employee advancement and career progression, termination,

visitors. The majority of these concerns related to organizational climate and to leadership decision-making.

An important role of the Ombuds Office is to identify patterns, trends or systemic issues to bring to the attention of institutional leadership. These are issues of concern, usually raised by multiple visitors on multiple occasions, which could influence the MCW environment for staff and/ or faculty.

On page 8, **Table 2** provides a brief description of these systemic issues which have been, or will be, addressed with MCW leadership. In addition to the issues noted in **Table 2**, as in past years, the MCW Ombuds have discussed a number of department-specific issues with MCW leadership while preserving the confidentiality required by our Office.

Abrasive Behavior as a Common Theme

As noted in **Table 2**, rude or abrasive treatment among colleagues at MCW was a common theme identified in visits to the Ombuds. The great majority of these concerns occurred between supervisors, (including Department Chairs, Division Chiefs and front-line supervisors) and individuals they supervise.

Such behavior rarely occurred as a single event; rather, the effects of such behavior accumulated over time. Office gossip, mean comments, angry outbursts, public or private humiliation and insults are examples of reported behaviors. Mistreatment by those in authority often is believed to have additional consequences, and is perceived to interfere with salary increases, job transfers or promotions.

Although hurtful, morally wrong or inappropriate, this type of abrasive behavior generally does not meet the legal definition of harassment or discrimination. Nevertheless, intentionally hurtful behavior in the workplace is unacceptable.

Because subtle and indirect mistreatment is not easily identified or controlled by policy, organizations depend on their leaders and

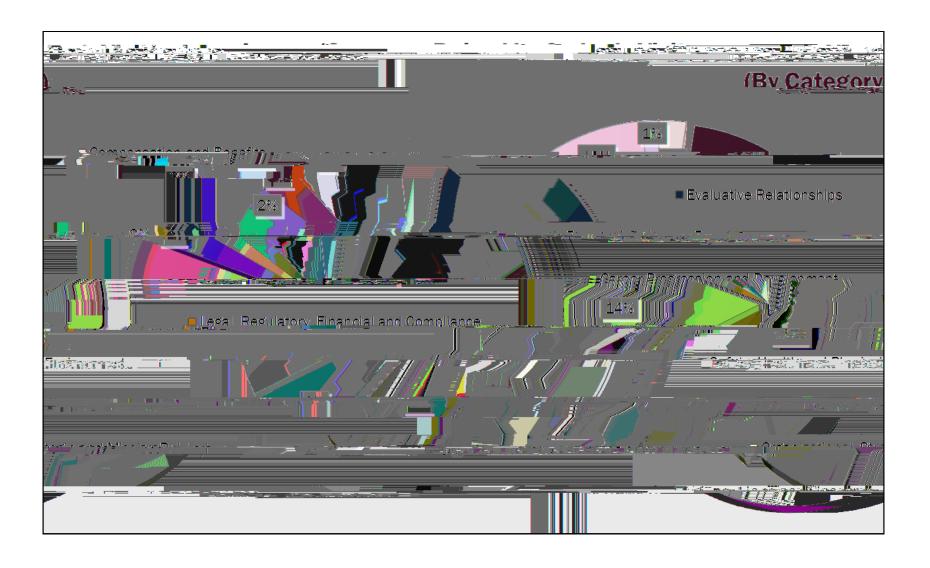


employees to hold one another accountable for maintaining a respectful, collaborative and ethical culture. Barriers to speaking out against such behaviors include fear of retaliation, fear of losing

As a common theme reported across multiple departments by multiple visitors, abrasive behavior has risen to the level of a systemic issue reported to the highest levels of MCW leadership; the Ombuds Office will continue to monitor the frequency of this issue over time.

Table 1

January 1, 2015 December 31, 2015



Mistreatment of subordinates by colleagues who are in a position of authority.

Disrespect, intimidation, hostility and threats of retaliation that do not violate legal or institutional policy but harm morale, engagement, productivity and health.

Clinical coverage limitations in some departments contributing to low morale, intimidation, infighting and disrespect.

Insufficient input from staff and faculty regarding performance of their supervisors and leaders which allows problematic behaviors to continue.

Inconsistency in performance improvement and employment nonrenewal processes, particularly related to transparent, respectful and direct communication. These inconsistencies impact both staff and faculty, though the Ombuds Office has heard about this issue more often from faculty than from staff.

Four-Year Trends

The Ombuds Office has collected data on the nature of concerns discussed since the Office was created in November 2011. Tracking these concerns over multiple years provides additional insights about important shifts in the organizational climate over time. A review of these trends shows that the most significant change occurred in evaluative relationship concerns (concerns about relationships with either supervisors or supervisees).

These concerns have nearly doubled over a four-

