

A&S Graduate Ombudsperson Report for July 2018 - June 2019

Peter Vishton, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, vishton@wm.edu

A total of 19 graduate students contacted the ombudsperson for consultation.

A wide range of issues arose over the course of the year, including student-advisor conflicts over timing of feedback and progress toward degree completion, student collegial conflicts, and dealing with the abrupt departures of faculty advisors.

The time-scale of meetings varied widely. The shortest cases were resolved through a meeting and set of e-mails exchanged within a few days. The longest case required an extensive set of conversations and interactions with several professors and directors of graduate studies.

The ombudsperson presented a discussion of "pedagogical pitfalls" with incoming graduate students at the graduate school orientation. In part this was to discuss the role of graduate students as teachers, but primarily the aim was to increase students' familiarity with the Ombudsperson and the process of addressing potential grievances.

The ombudsperson participated in meetings of the Committee on Graduate Studies as well, with the goal of maintaining close contact with the many graduate studies programs.

The ombudsperson met periodically with Mark Patterson, the general College ombudsperson. We discussed how our two positions should interact to best serve the College community.

After the departure of Patterson, the ombudsperson served on the search committee for his replacement.

All cases have been resolved.

NOTE: In September 2019, Vishton accepted a temporary "rotator" position, working with the National Science Foundation as their Program Director for Developmental Sciences. This detail will require frequent travel to the DC area over the next several years. As such, Vishton has stepped down from the ombudsperson position. Phil Daileader, professor of History and former ombudsperson, graciously stepped forward to fill the position on an interim basis. A search for a long-term replacement is underway.