

A&S Graduate Ombudsperson Report for July 2019 - June 2020

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A total of three graduate students and two Department Chairs contacted the ombudsperson for consultation. William & Mary's COVID-19-related campus closure in March 2020 almost certainly lowered the number of graduate students who contacted the ombudsperson, as the end of the academic year is typically the ombudsperson's busiest time.

Graduate students consulted with the ombudsperson regarding issues of intellectual property, work relationships, and mental health resources. Department Chairs consulted with the ombudsperson regarding the termination of advisor/advisee relationships, and regarding allegations brought to Department Chairs by graduate students alleging psychological abuse at the hands of faculty members. In all cases, the ombudsperson helped graduate students and Department Chairs to devise solutions that would serve the graduate students' best interests. Specifically, the ombudsperson provided relevant information to consultants, discussed possible courses of actions with them, and, in the case of Department Chairs, helped to devise solutions that ended current problems and served to prevent future recurrences.

The time-scale of meetings varied widely, with the simplest matters resolved in a week or so, and more complex matters requiring several weeks of meetings and discussions.

In addition to individual meetings with graduate students, faculty members, and Department Chairs, the ombudsperson participated in the August 2019 Graduate Student Orientation program, speaking to graduate students about the ombudsperson's office and its availability to them.

The ombudsperson maintained an awareness of the decisions made by Committee on Graduate Studies as well, in order to understand the current state of graduate education at William & Mary as fully as possible, especially as regards curricular requirements.

As of 30 June 2020, all cases brought to the ombudsperson had been resolved.