



WILLIAM & MARY

CHARTERED 1693



OFFICE OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OMBUDS

ANNUAL  
REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR  
2024-2025

# Letter from the Ombuds

Dear William & Mary Community,

This report outlines the activities of the William & Mary Ombuds Office from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. We are honored by the trust the William & Mary community places in us to assist with workplace concerns. We believe strongly in the power of the ombuds role in helping William & Mary staff and faculty address challenges they face and in working to improve the experience of all staff and faculty at William & Mary.

In addition to our work with visitors and engaging in outreach across the university to educate the campus community about the ombuds role, we are actively exploring ways to expand conflict resolution trainings offered on campus. Last year, through a generous alumni grant to the Ombuds Office, we funded a series of conflict resolution trainings to campus. Those trainings were well-received, leading us to believe there is an appetite for providing future such opportunities. As we think through conflict resolution training needs on campus, the Ombuds Office is actively exploring ways to coordinate such efforts.

As ombuds, we adhere to the standards of the International Ombuds Association (IOA) and remain strictly confidential, independent, and impartial. We welcome your feedback and suggestions on how we can improve our services and better assist members of the William & Mary community. We look forward to continuing to work with community members in navigating workplace conflict as we strive to improve the faculty and staff experience at William & Mary.

**Liz, Rick & Rebecca**  
University Ombuds



WILLIAM & MARY

UNIVERSITY OMBUDS

*Informal · Independent · Impartial · Confidential*

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ANNUAL REPORT

*for*

Academic Year 2024-2025

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# Ombuds Overview

The Office of the University Ombuds at William & Mary serves as an independent and neutral resource where all categories of employees and faculty can seek confidential assistance with workplace concerns.

The Ombuds Office offers a unique mix of skills and tools to help you navigate work-related conflict. We ensure that all employees have access to a resource for informally addressing workplace concerns in a fair and equitable manner. The Ombuds Office is not affiliated with any W&M compliance function.

The University Ombuds is **confidential, independent, impartial, and informal.**

We provide consultations and serve as a neutral party in resolving workplace conflict. The University Ombuds supplements rather than replaces formal resources for grievances such as those of Compliance & Equity, Human Resources, and the Office of University Counsel. As an independent office, we do not serve as an agent of notice for William & Mary.

“Advancing equity and wellness for faculty and staff is one of the goals I committed William & Mary to under the pandemic. Building a team of ombuds professionals at William & Mary is an important step toward these goals.”

Katherine A. Rowe, Ph.D.  
President

*In a 2021 Statement about the Ombuds*

The Office of the University Ombuds was restructured in 2021. Instead of a single Ombudsperson, W&M adopted a team-based collateral duty model consisting of a three-person University Ombuds Office.

The restructuring of the Office of the University Ombuds provides faculty and staff with a centralized place to consult on options with an aim to ensure that conflict is resolved in a swift and fair manner.

# Who are the Ombuds?

The duties of the University Ombuds Office at William & Mary are fulfilled by three employees who serve as collateral duty ombuds. Combined, the Ombuds have broad expertise and diverse work experiences within W&M. Ombuds are dedicated facilitators and university professionals with a mission to provide confidential and impartial assistance to employees with workplace concerns.



## **Rebecca Green**

Ombuds, Office of the University Ombuds

An expert in alternative dispute resolution and election law, Rebecca serves as a Professor of Law at W&M Law School and co-directs the Election Law Program. She earned her J.D. from Harvard Law School.



## **Charles (Rick) Gressard**

Ombuds, Office of the University Ombuds

Rick is Chancellor Professor Emeritus from the W&M School of Education. He is an expert in counseling and has served in a wide array of faculty leadership roles. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa.



## **Liz Cascone**

Ombuds, Office of the University Ombuds

Liz is the Director of The Haven in the Division of Student Affairs. Liz has extensive experience in sexual and intimate partner violence prevention, advocacy, and counseling and is training in restorative practices. Liz has a master's degree in social work from Virginia Commonwealth University.

# Our Principles

At William & Mary, our office is dedicated to serving as an independent, confidential, neutral, and centralized resource for faculty and staff. We are an independent office and do not align ourselves with any organizational entity nor any W&M compliance unit.

Any person who seeks the services of the Ombuds Office has the right to consult **CONFIDENTIALLY** with an ombuds without reprisal.

Ombuds from the Office of the University Ombuds at William & Mary are members of the International Ombuds Association ("IOA").

William & Mary **strictly prohibits retaliation** against **any** administrator, faculty, employee, or student for using the services provided by the University Ombuds.

# Our Practice Statement

Consistent with IOA Standards of Practice, the William & Mary Ombuds Office serves as a confidential, independent, and neutral resource for faculty and staff members at William & Mary.

William & Mary Ombuds do not serve as advocates for individual visitors, nor for university leadership. We remain avowedly neutral; we are here as a resource for talking problems through, helping visitors gather information, and exploring potential options. Our office helps you understand and navigate University procedures and policies.

The William & Mary Ombuds Office operates within the ethical standards set forth by IOA. This means that William & Mary Ombuds will act in accordance with the principles mandated by the IOA: independence, neutrality, impartiality, confidentiality, and informality.

# IOA Principles

We strictly adhere to the IOA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

The ombuds is independent in structure, function, appearance, and decision-making. The ombuds reports to the highest possible level within the organization and does not report to a function or entity that could affect, or be perceived as affecting ombuds' independence.

## **IMPARTIALITY**

The ombuds is a designated neutral and impartial resource who does not take sides or serves as an advocate for any person nor entity. The ombuds avoids conflicts of interest and conduct that could be perceived as a conflict of interest.

## **INFORMALITY**

The ombuds does not participate in any evaluative, disciplinary, legal, or administrative proceedings related to concerns brought to the ombuds' attention. The ombuds is not authorized to make business and policy decisions or conduct formal investigations on behalf of the organization. The ombuds is not an agent of the organization for purposes of receiving notice of claims against the organization and is not authorized to be a formal reporting channel for the organization on matters brought to the ombuds' attention except when specifically, and expressly mandated by law.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

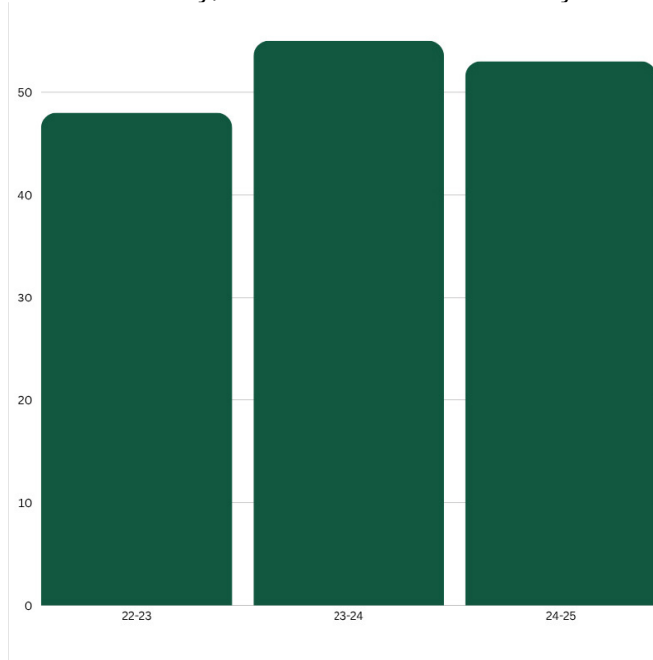
Confidentiality is the defining characteristic of ombuds practice. The identity of those seeking assistance from the ombuds and all communication with them are confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. The ombuds may, at their sole discretion, disclose confidential information when the person seeking assistance gives permission to do so; when failure to do so might result in an imminent risk of serious harm; or as necessary to defend against a formal complaint of professional misconduct.



# Data Analysis (Overview)

Consistent with the IOA Standards of Practice to protect the confidentiality of visitors, the Office of the University Ombuds at William & Mary does not retain any records that would identify a specific individual visitor. We only use demographic and non-identifiable data that are captured in the aggregate to identify trends, systemic issues, and assess Ombuds services.

For the Academic Year (AY) 2024-2025, the Ombuds Office had 53 visitors. At William & Mary, the Ombuds Office only serves members of faculty and staff.



While some visitors have straightforward issues and can be helped within a single visit, others are best served by multiple visits and a substantial amount of work on the part of the Ombuds Office between sessions.

The total visitor count for AY 24-25 was 53 which is only two less than AY 23-24, and represents a continued steady demand for ombuds services.

At William & Mary, our community knows the importance of quality leaders. With the continued rise in challenges and expectations found at an institution the caliber of William & Mary, effective leaders has never been more important.

For AY 24-25, 13 percent of the visitors held a supervisor, manager or chair position. This represents a 9% decrease in visitors who represent faculty and staff leaders from AY 23-24. This decrease matches the 9% decrease that occurred between AY 22-23 and AY 23-24, indicating a two year trend of a drop in the percentage of leaders and an increase in the number of employees being supervised.

As an independent office and impartial resource, we do not serve as advocates for any visitor, including University leadership. Our focus as ombuds does include regularly helping faculty and staff who hold managerial, chair, or supervisor positions navigate issues so they have the clarity necessary to improve and succeed.

# 13%

Visitors who identified as holding a supervisor, manager, or chair position.

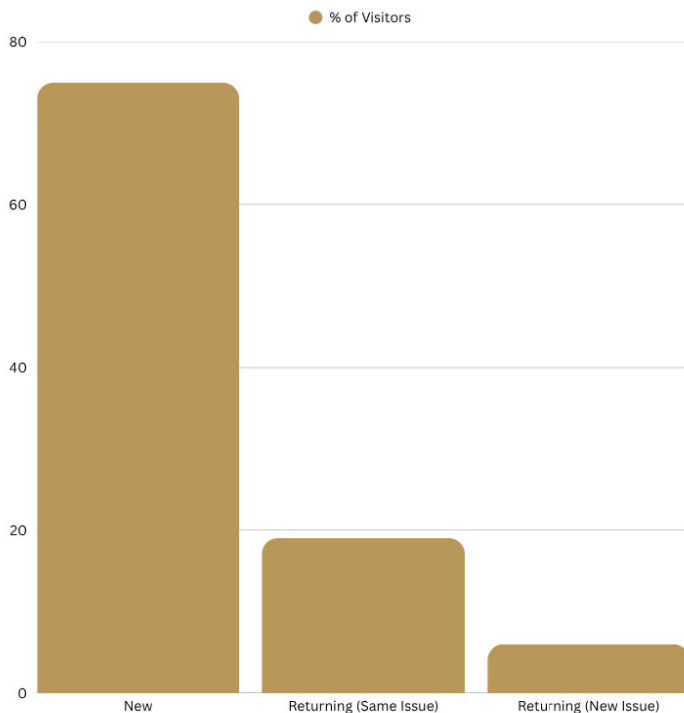


# 9%

Percent decrease from AY 23-24 to AY 24-25

# Data Analysis (Visitor Type)

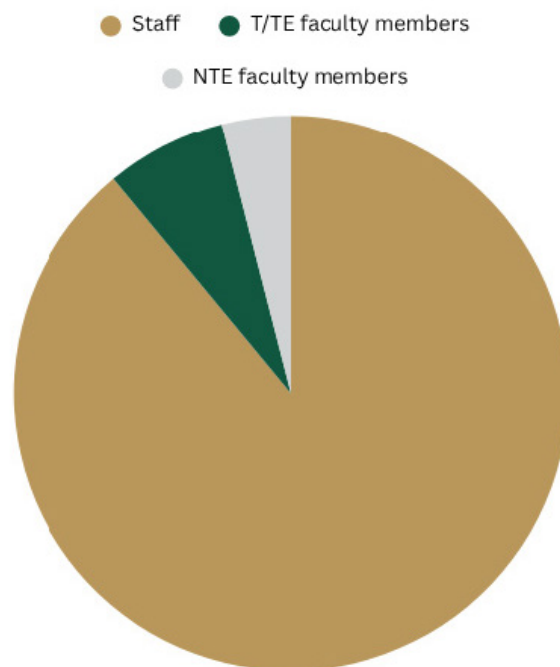
**Visitor Interaction Type**



The W&M Ombuds Office tracks several categories of visitor types. Since a key component of the ombuds' work is to understand systemic issues, it is essential to know whether visitors are new (first-time), returning with the same issue, or are returning with a new issue. For AY24-25, the ombuds saw a similar percentage (75%) as AY 23-24 visitors (80%) who were new. Ten (19%) visitors were returning with the same issue and 3 (6%) returned with a new issue.

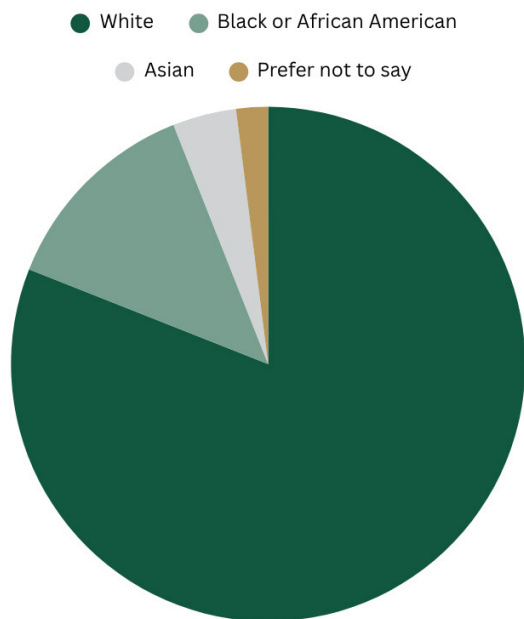
The University Ombuds Office tracks employee classification as category of visitor type to analyze potential or existing trends among different employee types. Our data protocols separate faculty into Non-Tenure Eligible (NTE) and tenured or Tenure-Eligible (T/E).

For AY 24-25, we saw 47 staff members (89%), 4 T/TE faculty members (7%), and 2 (4%) NTE faculty members. These numbers represent an increase in percent staff members from 76% to 88% and a corresponding decrease in both T/TE and NTE faculty members.



**Visitor Employee Classification**

# Data Analysis (Demographics)



81%

**White**

13%

**Black or African American**

4%

**Asian**

2%

**Prefer not to say**

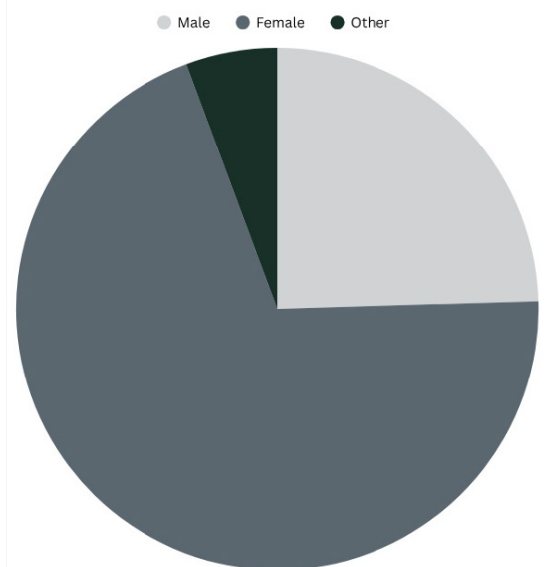
During AY 24-25, the University Ombuds Office saw 37 (81%) female visitors which was an increase from 69% in AY 23-24. The percent of male visitors decreased from 17 (30.9%) to 13 (24.5%) and 3 visitors identified as other.

The Ombuds Office continues to promote the importance of inclusivity by serving all faculty and staff of the University regardless of how they may identify.

The Ombuds Office tracks demographics that do not contain identifiable data, ensuring full confidentiality of all our visitors.

AY 24-25 saw a 5.5% to 13% increase in visitors who identified as Black or African American and a decrease of those who identified as Asian from 7.3% to 4%. Visitors who identified as white remained roughly the same at 81%.

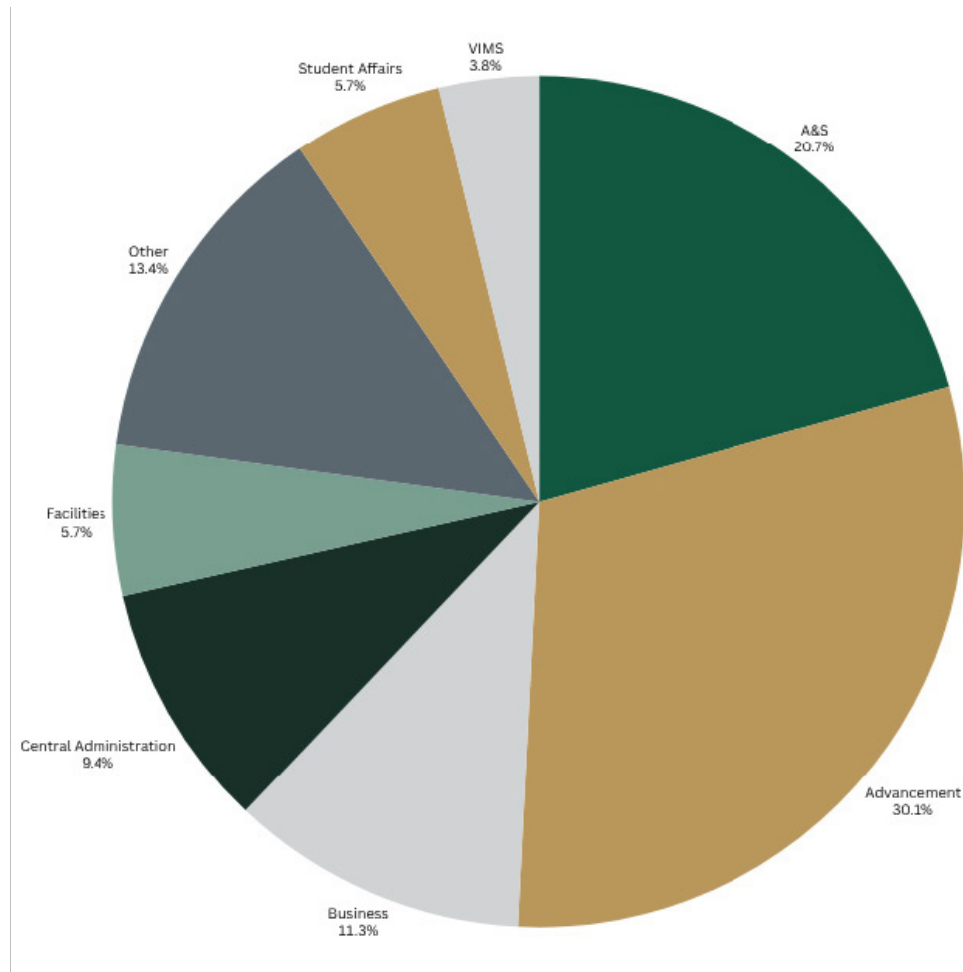
The W&M Ombuds Office continues to serve as an impartial resource while making strides to ensure an inclusive and welcoming environment.



**Gender Identity**

# Data Analysis (Demographics)

## Division Affiliation



The Ombuds Office changed its categorization to better reflect the different departments at the University starting in 2023-2024. Changes for July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 included adding Athletics, Advancement, and Data Science.

The inclusion of Advancement as a separate division had an impact on the patterns of Ombuds Office visitors' affiliation. Thirty percent of Ombuds Office visitors were affiliated with the Advancement. Twenty percent of the visitors were affiliated with Arts and Sciences compared to 29% last year, visitors from the Business comprised 11% this year compared to 2% last year, and 9% of the visitors were affiliated with Central Administration as compared to 13% last year.

# Data Analysis (Issue Areas)

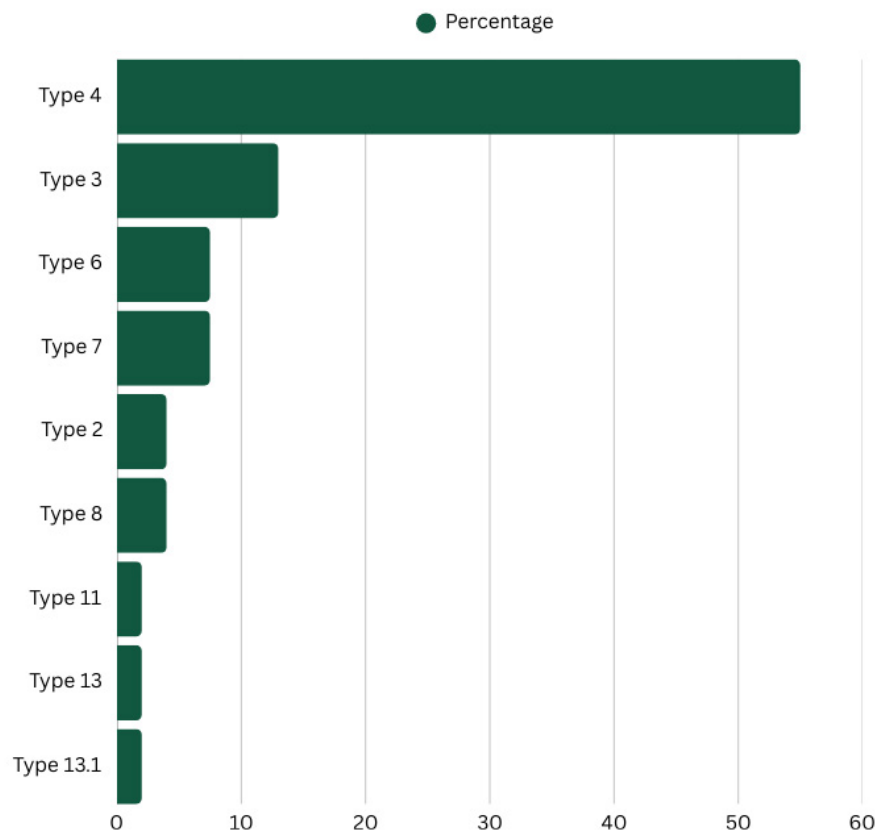
The Office of the University Ombuds subscribes to the uniform reporting categories practice and tracks issue areas by type for data analysis. Currently, we use Types 1-16 to identify and track issue areas. The assigned number type does not correspond, in any way, to its level of importance.

Due to the complexity of certain issues, the Ombuds Office tracks data on secondary issues that may accompany visitors' primary issues. We use the same Type tracking for issues identified as either *primary* or *secondary*.

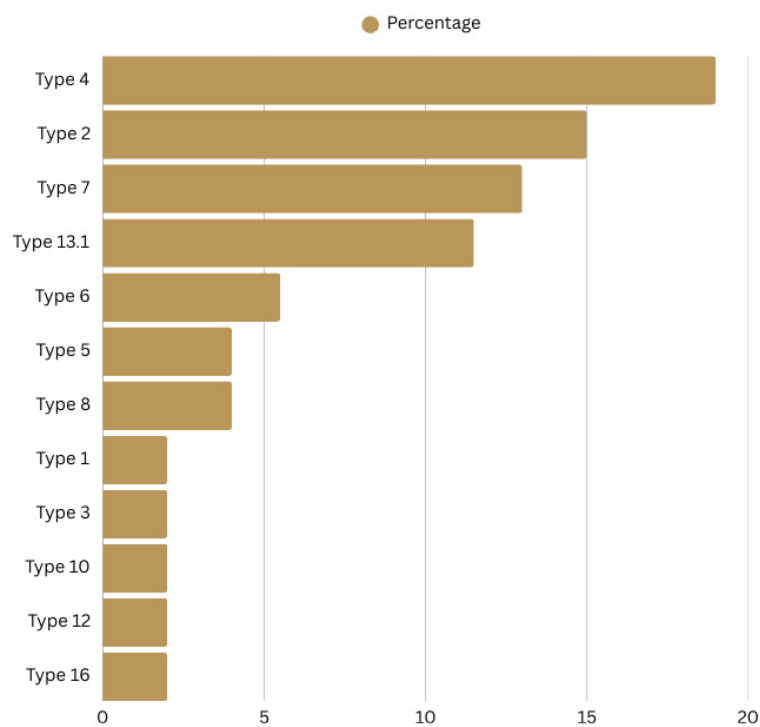
|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Type 1    | Organizational, Strategic, & Mission Related |
| Type 2    | Discrimination & Harassment                  |
| Type 3    | Career Progression & Development             |
| Type 4    | Evaluative & Evaluative Relationships        |
| Type 5    | Compensation & Benefits                      |
| Type 6    | Values, Ethics & Standards                   |
| Type 7    | Peer & Colleague Relationships               |
| Type 8    | Central Administration                       |
| Type 9    | Safety, Health & Physical Environment        |
| Type 10   | ADA & Disability                             |
| Type 11   | University Policy & Central Administration   |
| Type 12   | Legal, Regulatory, Financial & Compliance    |
| Type 13   | Services & Administrative Issues             |
| Type 13.1 | Administrative Responsiveness/Inefficiency   |
| Type 14   | External Issues                              |
| Type 15   | Academic Affairs                             |
| Type 16   | Other  |

# Data Analysis (Issue Areas)\*

### AY 24-25 Primary Issue Areas by Category Type (Chart)



### AY 24-25 Secondary Issue Areas by Category Type (Chart)



# Data Analysis (Issue Areas)\*

## AY 24-25 Primary Issue Areas by Category Type (Table)

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Evaluative & Evaluative Relationships (T4)         | 55%  |
| Career Progression & Development (T3)              | 13%  |
| Values, Ethics & Standards (T6)                    | 7.5% |
| Peer & Colleague Relationships (T7)                | 7.5% |
| Discrimination & Harassment (T2)                   | 4%   |
| Central Administration (T8)                        | 4%   |
| University Policy & Central Administration (T11)   | 2%   |
| Services & Administrative Issues (T13)             | 2%   |
| Administrative Responsiveness/Inefficiency (T13.1) | 2%   |

## AY 24-25 Secondary Issue Areas by Category Type (Table)

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Evaluative & Evaluative Relationships (T4)         | 19%   |
| Discrimination & Harassment (T2)                   | 15%   |
| Peer & Colleague Relationships (T7)                | 13%   |
| Administrative Responsiveness/Inefficiency (T13.1) | 11.5% |
| Values, Ethics & Standards (T6)                    | 5.5%  |
| Compensation & Benefits (T5)                       | 4%    |
| Central Administration (T8)                        | 4%    |
| Organizational, Strategic, & Mission Related (T1)  | 2%    |
| Career Progression & Development (T3)              | 2%    |
| ADA & Disability (T10)                             | 2%    |
| Legal, Regulatory, Financial & Compliance (T12)    | 2%    |
| Other (T16)  | 2%    |

# Looking Forward

Consistent with the values of William & Mary, the Ombuds Office strives to foster a culture of integrity, inclusion, ethicality, and fairness. As ombuds, we remain strictly confidential, impartial, and independent serving as a centralized resource for all categories of faculty and staff at the University. As William & Mary grows, we continue to serve the community and assist in navigating workplace conflict and issues.

## In Gratitude

We are listening with open ears and look forward to feedback and suggestions from faculty, staff, and members of the administration on ways we can improve our services. We remain excited to serve and assist all levels of faculty and staff here at William & Mary.

Rebecca, Rick, & Liz  
University Ombuds

The Office of the University Ombuds at William & Mary is enormously grateful for the continued support by the Office of the Provost, W&M administration, and members of faculty and staff. With our collateral duty ombuds model, we look forward to continuing to serve the university community and enhance the workplace experience of the University.

We thank all members of the university community who have entrusted us to confidentially meet with them to assist in and navigate through conflict. It is our privilege to serve as a confidential and independent part of William & Mary's workplace resources.

\*Not all data presented in this report may equal 100 (Variation:  $\pm 0.01$  to 0.1) due to approximation for simplified visualization.



**Office of the University Ombuds**

William & Mary  
221 N. Boundary St.  
Williamsburg, VA 23185  
[ombuds@wm.edu](mailto:ombuds@wm.edu)  
[www.wm.edu/ombuds](http://www.wm.edu/ombuds)

*Prepared By:*

**Rebecca Green, J.D.**

Ombuds, Office of the University Ombuds  
[greenombuds@wm.edu](mailto:greenombuds@wm.edu)

**Rick Gressard, Ph.D.**

Ombuds, Office of the University Ombuds  
[gressardombuds@wm.edu](mailto:gressardombuds@wm.edu)

**Liz Cascone, MSW**

Ombuds, Office of the University Ombuds  
[casconeombuds@wm.edu](mailto:casconeombuds@wm.edu)



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