

# Medical College of Wisconsin Office of the Ombuds

Annual Report to Faculty and Staff  
*January 1 to December 31, 2020*

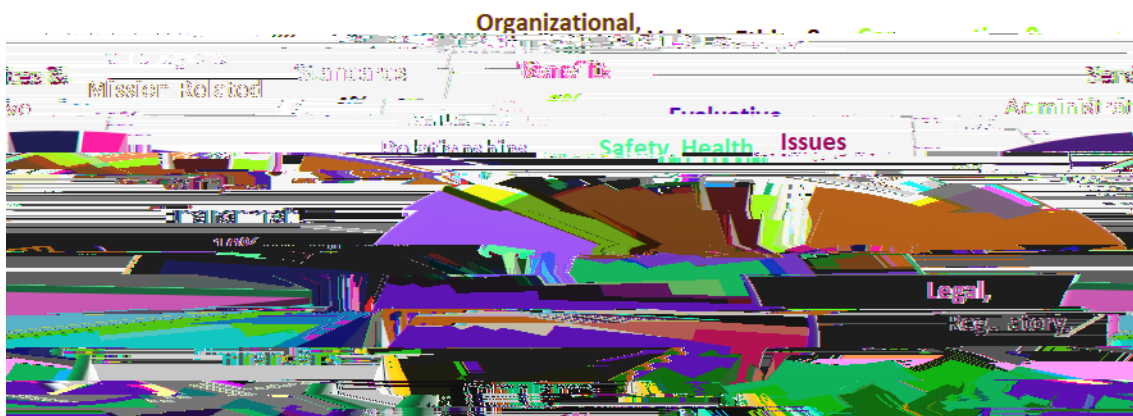
## Message from the Ombuds

It is a pleasure to share the ninth Annual Report from the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) Ombuds Office. We remain honored to serve as a confidential resource for MCW staff, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty, particularly so during the extraordinary challenges of this past year. We recognize that trust is an earned foundation for the Ombuds Office, and we are grateful to the individuals who place their confidence in our services. We also wish to express our appreciation to

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## CONCERNS BY TYPE



Overall

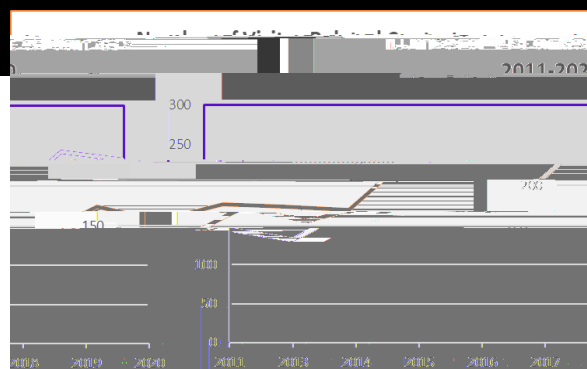
Visitor

Satisfaction

2017

2020

80%



## The Annual Report in Context

The Ombuds Office was established in the fall of 2011 by John R. Raymond, Sr., MD, MCW's President and CEO, as a resource for faculty, staff and postdoctoral fellows who wish to discuss workplace concerns or conflicts in a confidential space. The Ombuds Office practices in compliance with the [International Ombudsman Association \("IOA"\) Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics](#), adhering to the principles of confidentiality, independence, informality, and neutrality.

As described in MCW Corporate Policy [AD.CC.070](#), the Ombuds Office also serves as an information and communication resource, consultant, and catalyst for institutional change. The Office provides feedback to MCW leadership when trends, patterns, policies, or procedures of the organization generate concerns or conflicts.

As an informal, confidential, and impartial resource, the Ombuds may become aware of concerns that may not surface elsewhere. The issues presented are usually many-sided. The trends identified in the Annual Report are not intended to represent whole truths about complex issues or to criticize or assign fault. This Report is intended to inform the organization, as the concerns raised through the Ombuds Office may provide additional points of view for institutional review, learning and action. Prior year reports are available through the [MCW](#)

# Contact Log

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Ombuds' contacts transitioned to telephone and video beginning in March 2020.

From January 1 to December 31, 2020, the MCW Ombuds Office logged 231 total visitor-related contacts with individuals or groups of individuals. Of these contacts, 157 were distinct individual consultations, including 22 faculty and three staff exit interviews. 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. Staff exit interviews are conducted at the request of the departing staff member.

During the 2019 reporting year, the Ombuds Office began tracking leader consultations and inquiries: these contacts are initiated by the Ombuds and *only* with visitor permission. These contacts are generally made to inquire informally about a situation or to surface a concern anonymously on behalf of staff.

## Overview of Concerns

The [International Ombuds Association](#) (IOA) recommends tracking and reporting the number of issues discussed with the Ombuds rather than the number of visitors, groups of visitors or total individuals contacted, citing greater reliability in categorizing and reporting issues. To that end, this Annual Report provides a detailed tally of the issues discussed with the MCW Ombuds in accordance with the recommended reporting categories established by the IOA.

During the 2020 calendar year, 1252 concerns were raised by visitors to the Ombuds Office. These issues and/or concerns are further detailed in the IOA Category Table included in Appendix A. The 2011-2020 historical trends of the IOA categories of concern are available on the [Ombuds Office website](#).

As in past years, “Evaluative Relationship” concerns were the most common issue raised, comprising 53% of all issues reported in 2020. This category reflects concern regarding relationships with either supervisors or supervisees and is consistent with data reported by other organizational ombuds offices, as the power differences in these relationships may create additional strain.

## Thematic Issues and Concerns Identified by Visitors to the MCW Ombuds Office

Themes emerge over time through the issues brought to the attention of the Ombuds. These are matters of concern, usually raised by multiple visitors on multiple occasions. The following information provides a brief description of the themes which have been, or will be, addressed with MCW leadership. In addition to the issues described here, as in past years, the Ombuds have discussed several department-specific issues with MCW leadership while preserving the

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- Some employees grappled with expectations of around-the-clock responsiveness and/or increased micromanagement from their leaders after transitioning to remote work.
- As has been recognized world-wide, remote work put unique strains on caregivers who juggled the simultaneous demands of work and home caused by the pandemic.

### Administrative

- Some visitors expressed uncertainty as to whether inquiries and discussions with Human Resources are confidential. This may lead to misunderstanding and mistrust about the priorities and organizational role of Human Resources.
- Some faculty are uncertain about whom they might turn to as a faculty advocate when they encounter concerns that involve employees or policies of affiliate institutions. Additionally, institutional and departmental climate, communication norms and policy differences can complicate resolution of conflict within and across organizations.
- While MCW's nepotism policy addresses reporting lines to eliminate formal conflicts of interest, it does not take into consideration climate and communication issues related to personal relationships that fall outside of specific departmental reporting lines.

### Equity

- Gender
  - Although MCW has taken steps to address gender concerns, including support of the [Center for Advancement of Women in Science and Medicine \(AWSM\)](#), an annual [faculty salary equity audit](#), and the [IWill MCW](#) campaign), some (a)-2.2 (ig)1.5 (n))-4.5 (y2





- Promotion / Transfer
  - Staff applying for transfer or promotion within MCW have expressed concern that their current leader may have conflicts in supporting the employee's desired change in role, yet the leader's professional recommendation is required for such transfer.
  - Some long-term employees who are promoted or who transfer internally find that the required 12-month waiting period before further transfer limits opportunities for professional growth which may negatively impact employee retention.
- Faculty
  - Some faculty are not aware of institutional checks and balances in the faculty non-renewal process, particularly when a leader may have a perceived conflict of interest in issuing a non-renewal.
  - Some faculty pursuing clinician-educator or traditional promotion tracks find it difficult to fulfill promotion requirements, as protected time may be seen by some leadership as flexible and/or secondary to clinical demands. Others have commented that assistance provided by junior to senior faculty or work in the community should be taken into consideration for promotion and tenure across all tracks.
  - Some faculty express concern that conflicts of interest may exist for members of departmental and institutional promotion and tenure committees, and there does not seem to be an expectation that committee members recuse themselves when such conflicts arise.

## **Ombuds Office Visitor Experience Survey: 2017-2020**

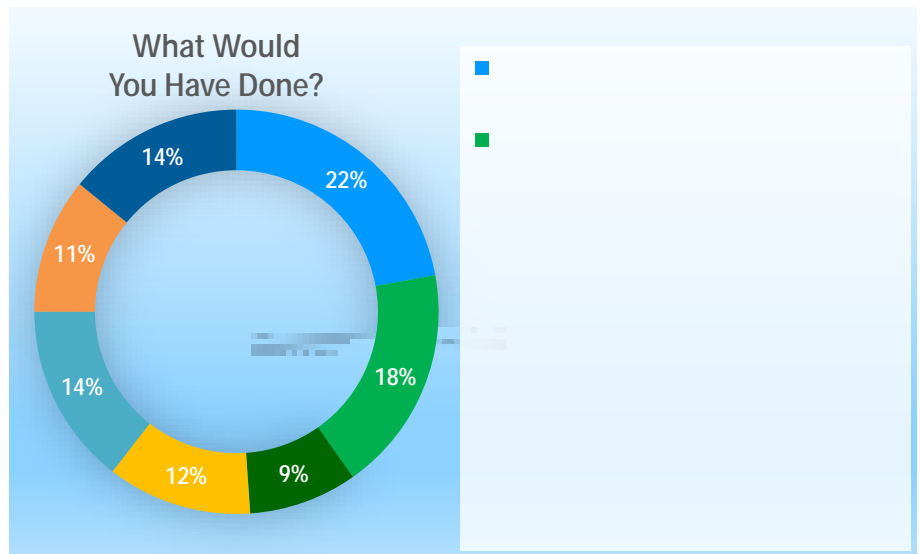
The Ombuds regularly invite members of the MCW community to provide feedback about the services of the Ombuds Office via an anonymous visitor experience survey. The survey link is available on the Ombuds Office website and accompanies the email signature of all outgoing messages sent from Ombuds Office. Hard copies are typically provided to visitors seen in person, with stamped self-addressed envelopes for anonymous return. An email reminder with an embedded link to the survey was distributed to all faculty, staff, and postdoctoral fellows in December 2020.

During the 2020 calendar year, the Ombuds Office received 74 survey responses, including 26 surveys from visitors to the Office. Due to this small visitor sample size, survey results for 2020 were combined with those from prior years (2017-2020).

Most individual items on the survey were rated on a five-point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A summary of survey items and response data in table form is included in Appendix B.

The survey also invites open-ended feedback regarding the services of the Ombuds Office. Survey comments from 2020 were **largely positive**, with respondents **expressing appreciation** that MCW provides a confidential and informal resource for addressing their workplace concerns.

*"I truly appreciate the experience I had with the Ombuds Office ... I was treated with civility, understanding, and really felt listened to .... Having a neutral party with no experience or reference to my department, my manager, or my situation allowed my representative to gather information and compile that with her skills and understanding of the institution and craft feedback that was tailored specific to me with multiple options."*



Comments from the 2020 survey also included a recurrent survey theme regarding

- The Dynamics of the Leader-Follower Relationship (60 minutes)
- The (Negative) Power of Assumptions (30-45 minutes)
- Curiosity as a Tool for Complicated Conversations (45 minutes)

## How to Contact the Ombuds Office

414-266-8776 (confidential line)

[ombuds@mcw.edu](mailto:ombuds@mcw.edu)

[www.mcw.edu/Ombuds](http://www.mcw.edu/Ombuds)

[Ombuds Visitor Experience Survey](#) (anonymous)

[Directions](#): Curative Building, Room 2512

Check out our blog, [Ombuds2512](#), for tips for improving work relationships, handling conflict at work, and addressing other workplace issues.

**INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION**  
**Reporting Categories**  
**January 2020-December 2020**

**Questions, Concerns, Issues or Inquiries where Information or Options are Explored**

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Category</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b><u>Compensation &amp; Benefits</u></b> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.				



difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation) y.04 refE/P 100 /Artif(ETJET6D80.ZP 19

3.h	<b>Retaliation</b> (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)	4	5%
3.i	<b>Physical Violence</b> (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)	1	1%
3.j	<b>Other</b> (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above categories)	1	1%

#### **4 Career Progression & Development**



4.1 **Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above categories)

22



19%



requirements for safety training and equipment)

6.b	<b>Physical Working/Living Conditions</b> (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)	4	3%
6.c	<b>Ergonomics</b> (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)	0	0%

6.d **Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and

facilities to prevent 21 3(t)-1.2(i)-9 (ons)-823ermheET01er)-6TB0ad.9 (or9 ( d)-9 ((d))TeTB0a(d))Te 131 310 0 Td( )

7.e	<b>Other</b> (any services or administrative issue not described by the above categories)	1	3%	
<b>8</b>	<b><u>Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related</u></b> Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.			
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>119</b>		<b>9.5%</b>
8.a	<b>Strategic and Mission-Related, Strategic and Technical Management</b> (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)	3	3%	
8.b	<b>Leadership and Management</b> (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)	5	4%	

Ques



Appendix B  
Visitor Survey Data 2017-2020

If you had not used the Ombuds Office, what would you have done? <i>(check all that apply; # Visitors Only / # All Respondents)</i>	Visitors Only	All Respondents
Left the organization (61/83)	22.10%	18.28%
Not talked with anyone about the issue (50/82)	18.12%	12.11%
Talked with my supervisor about the issue (24/55)	8.70%	12.11%
Brought the issue to a formal channel (32/49)	11.59%	10.79%
Not brought the issue up as quickly (40/50)	14.49%	11.01%
Changed positions within the organization (30/44)	10.87%	9.69%
Other (e.g., consult HR, seek legal action, ask a coworker for advice; 39/91)	14.13%	20.04%