



# Brandeis University Ombuds

*Supporting an ethical and civil culture encouraging mutual understanding and resolution through respectful dialogue and fair practices.*

## Quarterly Report: July 2018 – September 2018

### Introduction

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The Ombuds Office provides support in helping all members (referred to hereafter as “visitors”) of the Brandeis community resolve issues. The Office serves as a resource that is confidential, independent, impartial, and informal.

The Office was established in December 2017 at the recommendation of the Brandeis Chief Diversity Officer and Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Dr. Mark Brimhall-Vargas. The concept of a fully-staffed office that would serve the entire campus had its roots in Ford Hall 2015 and the demand by students that there be an Ombuds service for students. The services were broadened when Don Greenstein was hired as the lead Ombuds, joining collateral duty Ombuds, Cathy Burack and Elena Lewis. The three constitute the Ombuds team and serve the entire Brandeis community. The team is available to all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and anyone who has a situation, related issue, or conflict involving Brandeis University or anyone affiliated with Brandeis. The Ombuds staff practices in accordance with the professional organizational standards of the International Ombuds Association (IOA).

The Office’s primary purpose is to provide a confidential resource, where visitors can bring their concerns, questions, obtain assistance in self-empowered problem-solving, and support in considering their possible options for handling difficult situations. The Ombuds Office also serves as an alternative to formal channels of dispute resolution. The Office also provides information, while respecting visitor confidentiality, to University leaders on trends, policies or procedures, and patterns of issues that raise concerns so that they may be prevented from recurring or escalating.

This report provides information on the milestones and accomplishments of the Ombuds Office during the first quarter of the 2018-2019 academic year, and includes selected data on visits, referrals; and issues and trends that were shared with senior administrators.

### Milestones and Accomplishments

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#### Outreach.

Outreach activities focused on fostering collaborative relationships with other service providers on campus, and speaking with faculty, staff, and student groups. Outreach efforts include meetings with, and providing information to, the following individuals and groups:

1. Alex Rossetti, Director of Student Conduct and Student Affairs Office

2. Women and Gender Studies Program annual welcome back lunch
3. New Student Orientation – both undergraduate and graduate students
4. Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion sessions with new students – facilitators using the Brandeis University Multicultural Communication and Conflict Framework (MCCF)
5. Club Conference speaker - conference for student leaders
6. Dennis Hicks, Director of Student Activities
7. Department of Community Living Community Advisor Program
8. Hannah Anderson, Student Government President
9. International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)
10. *The Brandeis Hoot*, “Ombuds bring confidential resource to Brandeis community”, 9/28/18
11. Sarah Berg, Prevention, Advocacy & Resource Center (PARC)
12. Steven Weglinski, Graduate Student Affairs
13. Tim Touchette, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Director of Community Living
14. Anthony Sciaraffa, Title IX investigator and Paula Slowe, Title IX Case Manager

Visitors are finding out about the Office through a variety of means. About 16% of visitors heard about the office through a friend or colleague (peer), and 14% were referred by a non-peer faculty or staff member. Approximately 3% learned about the office through a poster, brochure, or advertisement, and 5% visited the website. Data continue to suggest that using our multi-pronged strategy of written material, office, classroom and event visits, speeches, individual and group meetings, and the Ombuds website is the most effective approach to making people aware of the office and its services.

## Visitor and Office Statistics

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Total number of visitors: 37 (including 1 mediation)

Gender		Race		Role	
24	Female	25	White	11	Students
13	Male	5	Black or African American	4	Faculty
0	Visitors "self described"	1	American Indian or Alaska Native	20	Staff
		5	Asian	2	Other
		1	Hispanic or LatinX		

## Visits

Tables 1 and 2 below show the number of hours and sessions spent with visitors this quarter.

**Table 1: Hours spent with visitors**

Hours	Mean	1.7
	Minimum	.50
	Maximum	15.0
	Total visitor Hours	61.75

**Table 2: Number of sessions spent with visitors**

		Visitors	Percent
Sessions	1	27	73%
	2	8	21%
	3 or more	1	3%
	Missing	1	3%
	Total	37	100%

## Primary Issues

Table 3 below shows categories of primary issues that were addressed during visits. Note that more than one could be identified during a single visit so percentages will not add to 100%.

<b>Table 3: Primary issues (check all that apply)</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Interpersonal (peer-to-peer personal issue)	8%
Employment (job related)	30%
Education (related to faculty, students, classroom issue)	8%
Personal (health, family, self)	14%
Other (informational or other unique issue/concern)	11%

## Primary Referrals

Table 4 below shows referrals made to other offices. Note that more than one referral could be made during a single visit so percentages will not add to 100%.

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**Table 4: Referrals (check all that apply)**

<b>Referred To</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Chief Diversity Officer	32%
Compliance Officer	0%
Counseling Center	8%
Dean – Academic	14%
Disabilities Services	3%
EAP	16%
Gender and Sexuality Center	3%
Human Resources	27%
Health Service	3%
ICC	3%
International Students and Scholars Office	3%
PARC/Office of Prevention Services	5%
Provost	5%
Spiritual and Religious Life	3%
Other including:	24%
Heller Assoc. Dean DEI	
Faculty member	
Waltham housing	
Registrar	
Brandeis general counsel	

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## Trends

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As noted earlier, “Trends” is a discussion of recurring themes that are informed by our data and the issues raised by visitors which we believe either signal the need, and/or present an opportunity, for intervention or action by campus leadership. Individual issues become “trends” when we recognize that multiple visitors from one or more offices, departments, or schools throughout the University community are coming to see us about the same problem. The following are the trends that arose this quarter. These trends have been shared with Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mark Brimhall-Vargas.

### Bullying between and among faculty/ staff.

We continue to hear reports from faculty and/or staff visitors, both individuals and groups, who feel bullied by superiors in their offices/areas. As noted in last year’s annual report, the bullying is not gender-based. While many of the complaints have been about men bullying women, we have also encountered women bullying other women. While power differentials exist between the bully and their target, the bullying occurs across rank and role, i.e., staff toward other staff, tenured faculty toward other tenured faculty, contract employees being intimidated by tenured faculty, staff being bullied by tenured and non-tenured faculty.

### Employee Supervision and Review

We want to highlight two recurring and interrelated issues that concern employee feedback and review. The context is as follows: there is tier of senior faculty, directors, and managers (henceforth referred to as “managers”) who supervise multiple individuals (e.g. from 5 to more than 20), and who themselves report to senior administrators (e.g. deans, directors, VP’s). These managers have authority over discrete units that often operate as silos. The faculty and staff employees in these units do not have a way to evaluate or give negative feedback about their “manager” because of the relative isolation and autonomy of their unit. These faculty and staff employees do not feel like they can communicate upwards to senior administrators out of fear of retaliation. The senior administrators are often perceived as inaccessible, and have not sought out feedback about the manager from direct reports as part of the manager’s review. HR is perceived as a “last straw” option.

The workplace issues that are arising in this context constitute the second aspect of this trend: the lack of good supervision practices. Frequently mentioned examples by visitors include not giving employees feedback on performance until the required annual review, having expectations that do not align with stated job responsibilities, messaging that communicating with others outside the unit about work conditions is not allowed, and on-going behavior that creates a work environment that is perceived as hostile. We know of four visitors who wanted to remain employed at Brandeis but left to pursue competitive offers at other institutions because of their workplace environments and their inability to talk with someone in authority, without making a formal complaint to HR.

## Goals and Next Steps

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The Ombuds team has established goals for the 2018-2019 academic year.

### Continuing Outreach

The Ombuds team has been meeting regularly and planning marketing meetings with all major offices and constituent groups within the University. The team will continue to schedule and meet with offices and groups on our list and is planning to schedule outreach trainings as well as brief meetings with students, faculty and staff in the upcoming semester. The Ombuds used the 2018-2019 academic calendar to leverage existing Brandeis events and deadlines to continue promoting our services, and partner with other offices that serve the Brandeis community. We will also attempt to make briefings to larger student groups and classes during the fall semester. The Ombuds office is working with HR to implement a video or in-person overview of the Ombuds Office for all new personnel.

### On-Going Service/Program Evaluation

The Ombuds Office is committed to continuous improvement to ensure we are operating efficiently and effectively as a unit. Last year we began to articulate the Ombuds Office theory of change to allow us to plan how to evaluate our impact on our visitors and the Brandeis community over time. In the short term, we will use our confidential visitor feedback survey to inform and strengthen our practices and services in support of the community.

### Increased Service to the Campus Community

We have 4 goals we hope to accomplish to enhance services to all members of the Brandeis Community.

1. We plan to set up office hours in specific areas of the campus to make the Ombuds Office more visible and accessible to students, faculty and staff in the coming year.
2. With three part-time Ombuds on staff presently, we'd like to add a multilingual Ombuds to the team to expand the Ombuds team's availability and accessibility to the Brandeis Community.
3. We are developing an array of self-help materials for our website on communication, conflict resolution, self-care, harassment and bullying, and discrimination.
4. While we currently offer limited conflict resolution services to individuals and groups, we aim to expand the availability of this service.
5. We try to timely respond to all contacts made with the Ombuds office in less than a 24 hour time period. It is not always possible to meet this timeline for in person meetings, and we are timely contacting people to let them know when we are available for in person meetings. We do handle some issues by phone or e-mail (when confidentiality is not an issue), which allows us to timely handle many contacts made with the office.

The number of visitors we have seen and the range of issues that have been brought to us underscore the necessity for the Ombuds Office. As we enter the 2018-19 academic year our goal is to serve the whole community in ways that are needed, desired and supportive for community growth in hopes to make Brandeis University a **healthier, compassionate, caring, respectful, and more productive community**.