

Brandeis University Ombuds

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

Annual Report: July 2021 - June 2022

Our Reporting Cycle

This is an annual report on the activities of the Brandeis University Ombuds Office including data from the months of July 2021 through June 2022. This report highlights information around visits, trends, and issues as well as the milestones and accomplishments of the Ombuds Office during the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Previous Ombuds reports are posted on the [Ombuds website](#).

Following the Spring Semester 2020, we released our first semesterly based report and updated our annual report schedule to be released following the Summer. These are changes as the Ombuds office had been reporting on a fiscal quarterly and annual year basis since the Spring of 2018. We plan to continue to update the format of our report in order to further the understanding of and identify opportunities for constructive change across the Brandeis community. As such, this information is shared throughout the campus community including the University President to encourage consideration of issues being raised and shared with the Ombuds team. We also hope that this will lead to institutional change, as well as equitable and fair practices throughout Brandeis University.

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Contact Us

For information on how to schedule appointments, ways we work with visitors, and access our online resources, visit us online at www.brandeis.edu/ombuds or call the confidential Ombuds office phone line at 781.736.2265. We are available year round to meet with visitors remotely by phone or Zoom, or in person at a time that works best for the individuals. At this time, please schedule an appointment by emailing brandeisombuds@brandeis.edu to meet with an Ombuds. You may request a specific individual or one will be assigned to contact you. Over the summer the Ombuds Director, Don Greenstein, is the only Ombuds working in the office. Mike Rozinsky and Esther Lin are part-time Ombuds who are employed 9 months a year working on an eight (8) hour a week basis.

About the 2021-2022 Annual Report

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Brandeis University Ombuds Office.

This was more of a hybrid year of Ombudsing! The Ombuds have met with people virtually as well as in person. Our goal is to meet people where they feel safe, either by Zoom or in person and even by phone.

The full service Ombuds office is 4.5 years old at Brandeis, and it has built a solid foundation across the University by providing independent, confidential, informal, and impartial conflict engagement services. The Ombuds team serves as navigators who support visitors' empowerment and connect people with appropriate and necessary resources that they may not even know exist as a place to help them resolve an issue or concern.

The Ombuds reporting cycle has changed from a fiscal quarter reporting cycle to semester reporting a year ago (Spring 2021). The Ombuds Office is now reporting a summary of the academic year in an annual report that will come out in the Fall of each year. This (revised cycle) annual report includes a summary of information from July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022, and it includes information on continual efforts to integrate and connect Ombuds services throughout the community and campus-wide. It updates and summarizes educational outreach services as the Ombuds team visits many different departmental faculty, staff, and student meetings/events. The Ombuds team spends time marketing its office services by attending meetings and making introductions with numerous campus offices, departments, and many student organizations and clubs. The Ombuds team continues to revisit some of these offices on an annual basis while balancing the needs of the community for visitor meetings, as well as making certain the office is known to all Brandesians. Most of this work had been virtual from March 13, 2020, as the Campus shut down for most in-person activities with the outbreak of COVID-19. We have come back to campus on a part time basis in the Spring of 2022 and expect to have the office open throughout the coming year for in person meetings.

People voluntarily speak with the Ombuds confidentially and off-the-record, and they obtain assistance to address a wide range of issues. For many office visitors, the Ombuds serves as a first stop for support, information, and resource identification and can lead to contact with other university and external community services.

Operationally, this past year saw the office maintain the same level of visit numbers by faculty, students, and staff. The office saw a 3% increase in visits over the prior year (288 visits in '20-'21 and 296 in '21-22). Cases again ranged across topics and numbers of contacts with themes and observations highlighted below.

The Brandeis Ombuds Office has been staffed by Don Greenstein, Ombuds Director, with two part-time Ombuds, Esther Lin and Mike Rozinsky, supporting the office (up to eight hours a week). These three have constituted the Ombuds team this past year and have served the entire Brandeis community. The team has been available to all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and anyone who has a situation or conflict related to Brandeis University. The Ombuds staff practices in accordance with the professional organizational standards of the International Ombuds Association (IOA). This report provides information on the milestones and accomplishments of the Ombuds Office during the 2021-2022 academic year and includes selected data on visits, referrals, issues, and trends. As the office looks to the future, it is important to appreciate the range of support offered from across the university. Special thanks to interim and present Brandeis Diversity Officer and Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, David Fryson and LeManuel Bitsóí, Provost Carol Fierke, and President Ron Liebowitz for their continued support.

Milestones and Accomplishments

Outreach

New part-time Ombuds Esther Lin was added to the Office in August 2021. Outreach activities focused on fostering collaborative relationships with other service providers on campus and speaking with faculty, staff, and student groups.

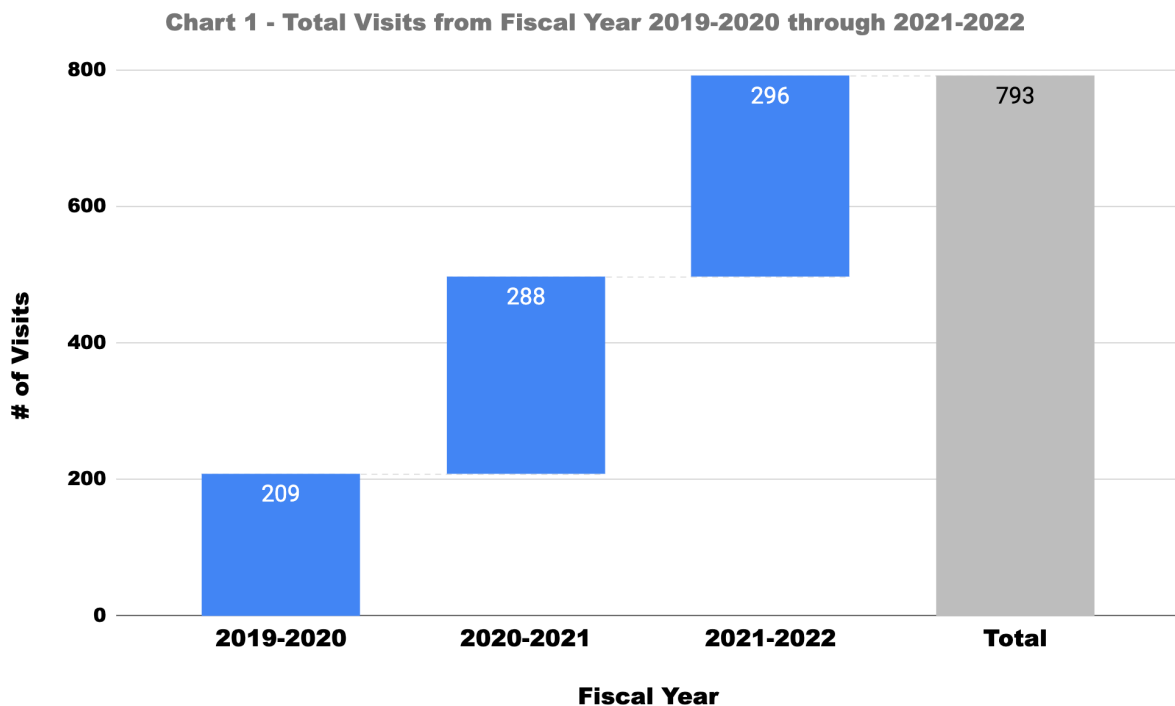
Outreach efforts this year included meetings with, and providing information to, the following:

- Arts and Sciences Dean, Department Chairs
- Science Department, Research Labs
- Care Team
- Goldfarb Library Staff
- Community Living Director & Assistant Dean of Student Affairs
- Community Living - Community Advisors
- Faculty member request for training students who serve as mentors
- Faculty Senate
- Gender and Sexuality Center
- Graduate Student Affairs Director and Assistant Director
- Heller Dean's Leadership Team
- Heller Sankofa Community Conversations and Town Hall
- Human Resources Team and Vice President
- Institutional Advancement
- International Business School Dean and Directors
- International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO)
- New Student Orientation – both undergraduate and graduate students
- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - sessions with new students and facilitators for Graduate and Undergraduate orientations
- Office of Equal Opportunity- Director and Staff
- Rabb Leadership Team
- Rose Museum – Director and Staff
- Sociology Department
- Student Accessibility Team
- Student Conduct and Student Affairs Office, Director and Staff
- Student Government President as well as Leadership Team
- Various graduate and undergraduate student groups
- Women and Gender Studies Program

Facilitated Retreats & Meetings

This past year, visitors shared situations with the Ombuds about varied interactions among faculty, staff, and students that were perceived as disrespectful and at times racially motivated. To that end, the Ombuds Office facilitated a number of retreats and meetings among a variety of teams across campus helping to establish norms and guiding principles. These sessions have been focused on helping individuals and teams work through differences and creating guiding principles/norms that help people overcome difficult dynamics and navigate difficult conversations. This is an effort that the Ombuds Office has continually offered and will be available to help teams and groups on campus find ways to work in a positive manner when conflict, incivility, and differences exist and arise. It's important for our community to understand that although differences will always exist, we are all unique human beings in the Brandeis community, and we add value to this community and learn from our differences in many ways.

Information & Highlights



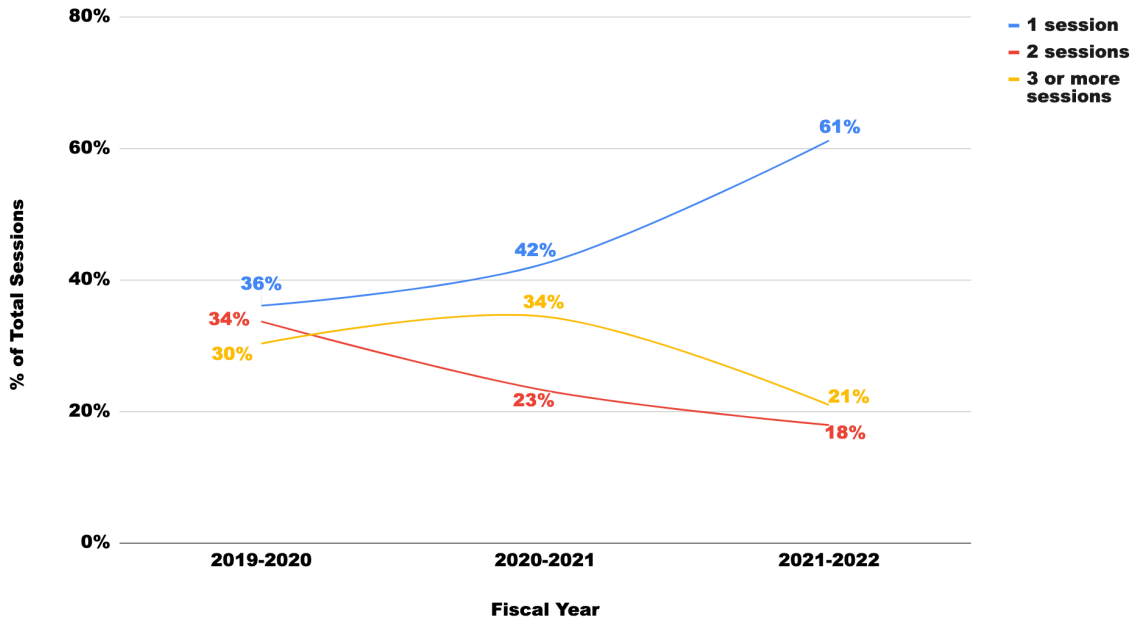
Our total number of visits from July 1, 2021 until June 30, 2022 is 296. This represents a 3% increase from FY 2020-2021 and a 42% increase from FY 2019-2020 FY visitors. [See a tabular view of Chart 1](#)

Informal Conflict Resolution Sessions

The total number of informal conflict resolution sessions in 2021-2022 was 19 sessions which is a significant increase over last year's 13 sessions.

A number of visitors opted for a facilitated conversation (informal mediation) rather than an individual one-on-one session. This allows for people to have difficult conversations with others in a neutral setting with a multi-partial facilitator. A number of these situations involved a strong desire by a team or a small group of individuals (~2-4) to communicate and work through differences with a neutral facilitator helping them create a safe and fair process allowing all involved to share openly or through shuttle diplomacy.

Chart 2 - Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022



While there has been some fluctuation in the number of sessions a visitor has with an Ombuds, it is clear that returning visitors have built trust with the Ombuds team and have a desire to return to the Office. There has been a marked increase in single session visits by visitors (42% up to 61%) and a decrease in returning visitors for two (23% down to 18%) and three or more sessions (34% down to 21%). [See tabular view of Chart 2.](#) The amount of time spent with an Ombuds in a single session increased slightly for visitors spending an hour or less as well as for two or more hours. It decreased slightly for those spending between one to two hours in a visitor meeting with an Ombuds. [See a tabular view of Chart 3](#)

Chart 3 - Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022

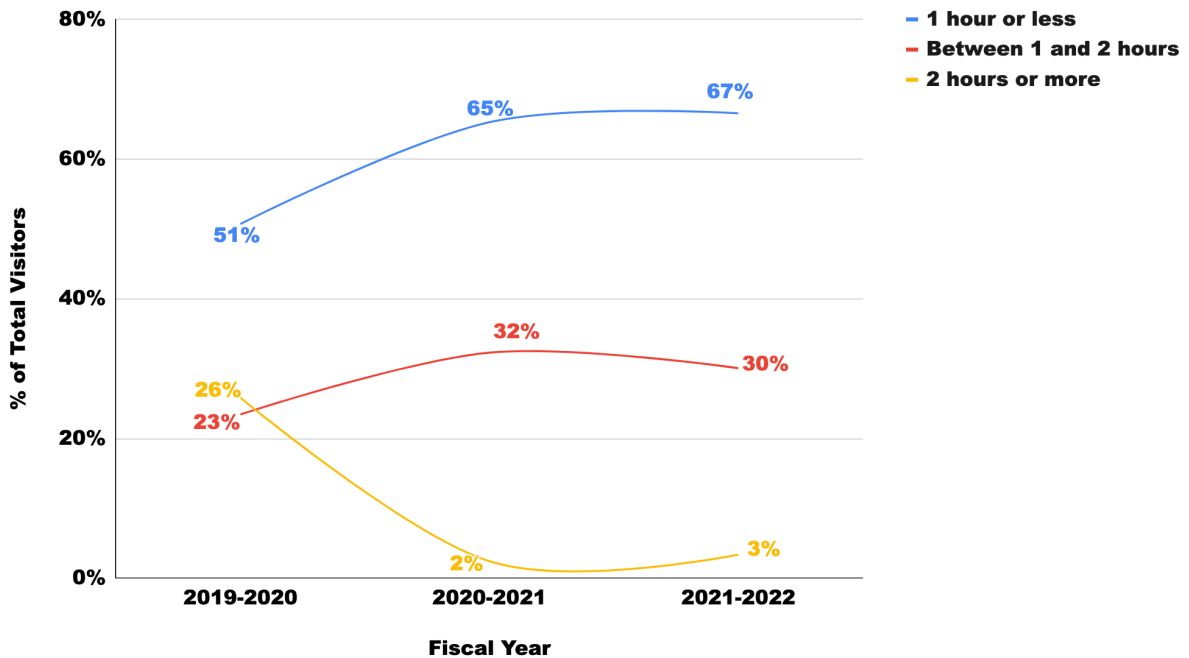
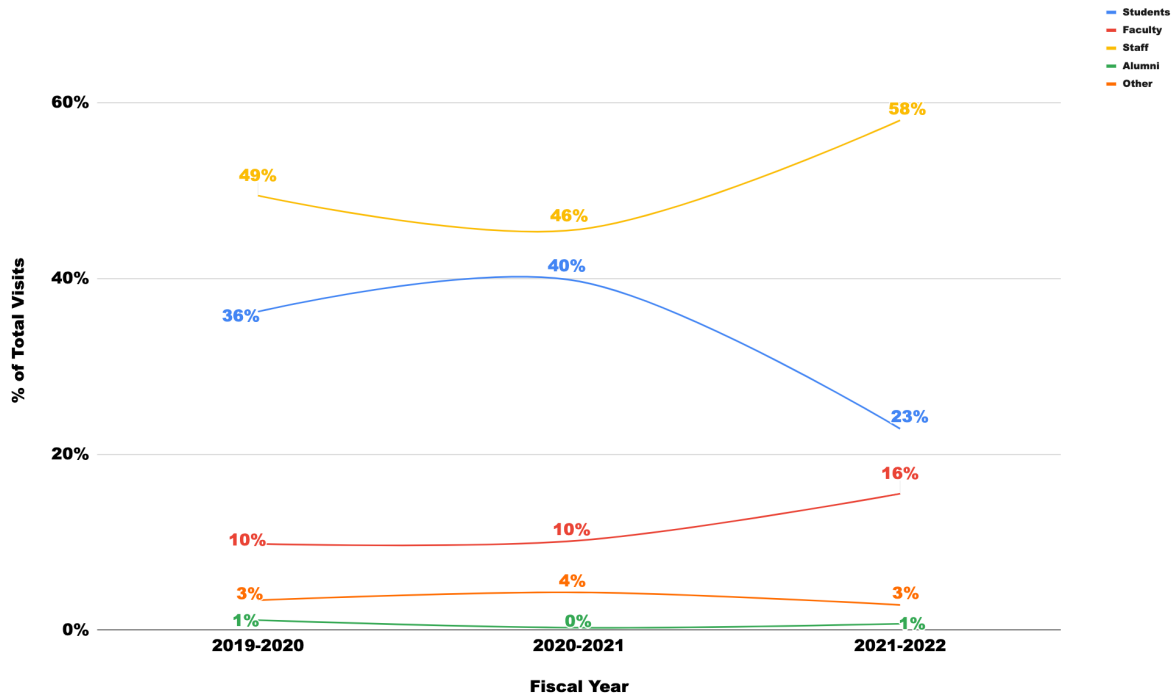
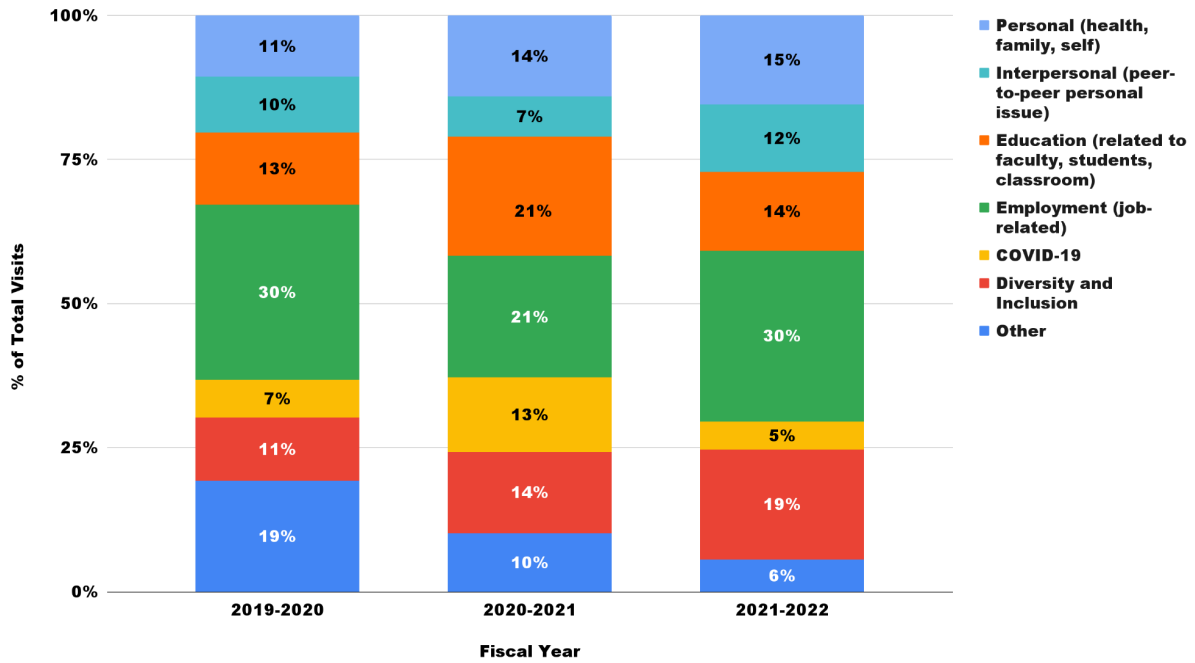


Chart 4 - Percentage of Visitor Populations from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022



It is quite clear that students and staff are the most frequent and regular visitors to the Ombuds Office. They are over 80% of all visitors to this office. The significant number of staff who visit the Ombuds Office clearly indicates a need to focus on the concerns and issues being raised by the staff (mostly workplace and policy concerns). Many of the staff feel as if their concerns are overlooked, and their managers are not attentive to their needs or situations. Staff do appear to feel comfortable with the confidentiality of the Ombuds Office and are concerned about what happens with formal processes especially with the potential for the visitor to lose their job or to be retaliated against by a superior. Faculty (especially tenured faculty) have not been a large percentage of the visits to the Ombuds Office. However, faculty make up only about 7% of the entire Brandeis population, so it is notable that 16% of visits this past year were with faculty. Contract faculty have been more routine visitors to the office. They also are carrying higher faculty class workloads, and many feel overworked and underpaid for their positions on campus. [See a tabular view of Chart 4](#)

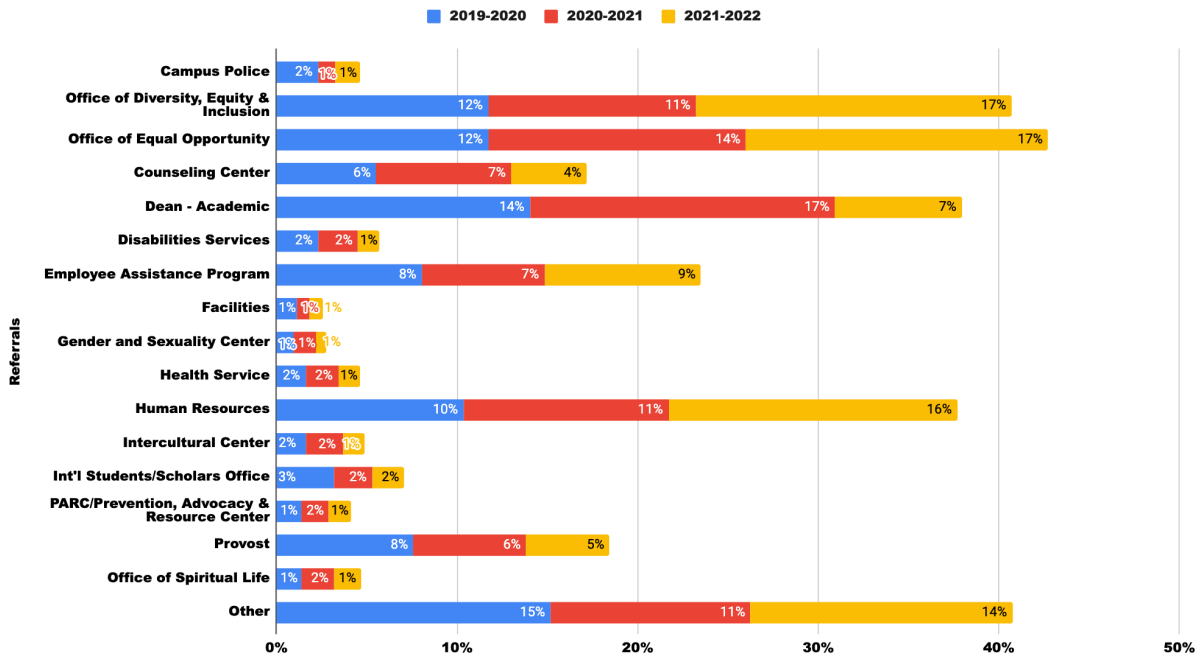
Chart 5 - Percentage of Primary Issues across Visits from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022



The “Other” issues that were brought to the Ombuds Office are identified in Appendix B to this annual report. Overall the Ombuds Office has seen almost a 10% increase in employment related concerns which represents a return to 2019-2020 levels. Additionally, we note an increase in diversity and inclusion, personal, and interpersonal issues this past year.

The return to campus and the combined stress of having to pick up work of departed colleagues has left much tumult in the return to workplace concerns raised on a regular basis by staff and faculty visitors. Notably, COVID-19 related concerns have decreased as the pandemic has become increasingly a part of “normal” campus life. [See a tabular view of Chart 5](#)

Chart 6 - Percentage of Referrals Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022



The mix of referrals made across the landscape of the Brandeis community is an example of the Ombuds Office helping people find appropriate office resources across formal and informal channels to pursue in order to meet their individual needs. The variation year over year across office referrals underscores the shifting needs for support that visitors have in different years. It is also clear that many of our staff, faculty, and students do not know where to go when they have a particular concern. The Ombuds team works hard to market our work and stay connected to campus resources. We regularly attend meetings to share, learn, and educate campus partners about what the Ombuds can offer, as well as how best to support and refer to other campus offices. The identification of “Other” referrals made by the Ombuds team are identified in Appendix C to this annual report. [See a tabular view of Chart 6](#)

Numeric Observations

The expansion of staffing has allowed for more time spent with visitors to resolve conflicts with the increased number of visitors the Office has experienced. The demand continues to outpace our staff work time capacity. Total number of visits may not have increased this past year, but follow-up consults with campus partners on questions related to visitor meetings as well as the overall length of time visitors spent in the office did increase. The number of visitors who returned to the Office for more than one visit was 54%. Over the year, the total number of visitors to the office has slightly increased. This reflects that the Ombuds Office is serving its purpose of empowering individuals and teams to work through the issues they raise.

Visitor Feedback

Visitors return for further support relating to the issue they came to the office to discuss, as well as return with new issues or concerns that have arisen. Visitors build trust in the office as they return or refer others to our office. An example of the feedback from post visit surveys sent out to all visitors after a meeting are reflected below:

“Thank you, Ombuds, for your support and for making me feel comfortable enough to work through my issue and find some confidence.”

“The ombud really listened and made me feel understood.”

“The Ombuds office is an excellent resource - they were empathetic, listened and helped me prepare for a difficult conversation with my team.”

“My concern is not resolved, [but] I had someone who listened to me and helped me think of options I had not considered.”

“The Ombuds team is incredibly helpful, and an important campus resource!”

“Thanks for your patience and kindness.”

“The process changed in a way I had not thought possible. The Ombud was exceedingly empathic and supportive... I was only slightly nervous before the facilitated conversation with someone who could have turned into an adversary. I wasn't prepared for hearing compassion and affirmation from the other person. I'm optimistic about the future relationship in a way I could not have imagined beforehand. Without the Ombud this likely would not have occurred.”

“It was especially helpful to be able to meet with ombuds prior to meeting for a facilitated conversation to address a challenging situation.”

Themes and Trends

Below is a discussion of themes and trends 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 and the Brandeis community. Individual issues become “trends” when we recognize that multiple visitors from one or more offices, departments, or schools throughout the University community are visiting us about the same problem/topic/concern. The following are the themes and trends, listed by semester, and suggestions that the Ombuds feel should be considered by the University.

Fall Semester

(July 2021-December 2021)

Management Practices

Similar to what we observed in last year’s Annual Report (2020-2021), visitors continue to be concerned about poor management practices. Managers who are perceived to have little or no training in management are viewed by direct reports as disrespectful or as bullying when they do not offer annual performance reviews or feedback. They frequently micro-manage and are overly directive of staff/faculty with limited discussion. Visitors have expressed frustration at lack of clear roles and lack of job descriptions that are aligned with the work they perform, as well as a need for clearer communication of expectations and opportunities for growth. Visitors also commented on supervisors who fail to give timely notice of significant changes in operations and offer transparent explanations. These units may have no norms/guiding principles about how a team of people is expected to work together in a positive manner. Training offered by the HR department or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for managers is not viewed as adequate to prepare managers to be the best they can be. Presently there appear to be few or no outside opportunities for manager training that may add value and help Brandeis managers perform and excel in their workplace. We have heard that outside training offerings are rarely offered in some parts of the organization due to budget constraints, while other components seek support from internal Brandeis resources that may not be well versed in management training skill building.

We have also heard from a number of visitors concerns relating to opportunities for growth and review of positions for salary valuation/increases. Along with this concern a number of different visitors have expressed concern about disparate treatment of lower level employees being required to cover for employees who have left or who are released from employment. These individuals are required to undertake work of the departed employee(s) and are not compensated or even given a spot award for their extra efforts. It has been shared that senior level employees in VP and senior VP roles are given compensation when their responsibilities shift such that they have to undertake other responsibilities for an interim period of time.

Disrespect, Incivility, and Bullying

Visitors of all types expressed concern about being treated with disrespect, incivility, aggression, and hostility in the workplace, classroom, and in interactions with various offices/departments across campus. Some visitors had already voiced their concerns and saw no action or change as a

result. Others expressed reluctance to voice their concerns for fear of retaliation or other negative consequences.

Visitors have also raised concerns about harassment and bullying at all levels of the University, staff on staff, faculty on other faculty, staff and students, and students on students, etc. This is a continuing trend on campus that the Ombuds Office keeps hearing about. We are aware that efforts are being made to develop a healthy workplace policy, which would be an appropriate resource articulating a standard and setting out appropriate workplace behavior. Enforced sanctions with severe repercussions for retaliatory behavior might encourage people to report inappropriate behavior.

Mental Health Concerns and Stress

Mental health concerns continue to affect the entire Brandeis community. Visitors also experienced high levels of stress due to various changes and transitions. The Brandeis Counseling Center (BCC) has been inundated with referrals from all over campus and has lost a number of its employees this past year. Continuity of BCC staff and availability to meet with students is needed during these ever changing times as we return to campus.

Remote Work and Accommodation Requests

The arrival of the first “normal” Fall Semester gave rise to various requests for remote work, as well as employment-related, academic, and residential accommodation requests. Visitors sought out support from the Ombuds Office as they navigated the process of making, obtaining, and at times appealing those requests. From faculty and students, there have been concerns about students’ accommodations that are offered but are not adequate to meet the health needs of those requiring accommodations. The Student Accessibility Office has been holding a regular community meeting with key stakeholders that has been addressing numerous accessibility concerns this past year. Something similar for staff and faculty would be appropriate as well. The Accessibility Office only serves students. The Office of Equal Opportunity and HR offices address ADA and accessibility requests.

Fear of Retaliation

Visitors generally come to the Ombuds Office because we provide a confidential and off-the-record space to discuss sensitive issues, and a common concern is fear of retaliation if visitors raise their concerns either through informal or formal channels. International graduate students, undergraduates, staff, and contract faculty on campus continue to express heightened concerns about reporting any issues for fear of retaliation and loss of work that will affect their job, their visas, and their relationships on campus. Graduate and undergraduate students working in research environments are of particular concern. Bystanders also have expressed fears of sharing information about inappropriate behavior on campus. Although strong statements have been made by leadership on campus about no tolerance for retaliation, there is still a concern about reporting, or even meeting with, those that are displaying this behavior. The fear of repercussions (losing a position or being demeaned by a person in power) is severe. In the research areas many know that their work post Brandeis will connect them again with those they are presently working with and that any formal reporting may impact them in their future employment.

Cultural Competence

International Brandesians and Brandesians of color raised the need for greater cultural competence across campus. At times these visitors have been met with lack of understanding or empathy about the ways their national, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds result in things being done a different way. Multiple visitors shared their experiences of being treated with suspicion and hostility by one campus entity, reportedly leading many members of the international community to seek necessary services off campus instead of continuing to engage with that campus entity which provides identical services. Frequently the off campus services have a financial impact on these individuals. Many departments and campus offices would benefit from more robust training and awareness around issues of cultural sensitivity, diversity, equity and inclusion. The Ombuds team is aware that the ODEI is hiring a full time education director, whose responsibilities will encompass this role.

Spring Semester

(January 2022-June 2022)

Management Practices

Visitors continued to express concerns about their supervisors during the second half of the academic year: unclear communication, lack of clarity around expectations, job descriptions, micro-managing, untimely delegation of tasks, failure to give timely notice of changes, and lack of response to reported issues. This semester, visitors also brought forth concerns about favoritism and inequities in managerial decisions, such as hiring, promotions, budgeting, and salary decisions. The Ombuds Office offered coaching and role playing to individual visitors¹, as well as facilitated conversations between direct reports and supervisors and norm/guiding principle-setting sessions for larger groups.

Disrespect, Incivility, and Bullying

Continuing from the Fall Semester, there were more concerns in the Spring regarding incivility and disrespect across campus. Some behaviors that were raised include disrespectful and demeaning speech in public settings and meetings, partiality/favoritism by a leader toward one individual, spreading rumors, making verbal microaggressions, and otherwise engaging in toxic and harassing conduct.

A number of visitors, both individuals and groups, also shared that they were bullied, pressured, and/or threatened by superiors or other people in positions of authority and influence, and at times by peers. Many of these visitors came to the Ombuds Office because they feared retaliation if they confronted the other individual or reported their behavior.

Cultural Competence

As was the case in the Fall Semester, international visitors and those of color raised concerns about others' lack of cultural competence in the Spring Semester. Visitors spoke of mistreatment by peers and those in authority on the basis of cultural differences, including different communication styles,

¹ Role playing helps visitors consider the interests of others involved, who are not present or are unwilling to participate in a facilitated discussion.

different ways of thinking and learning, and different assumptions and priorities. Many departments and campus offices would benefit from more robust training and awareness around issues of cultural sensitivity, diversity, equity and inclusion. The Ombuds team is aware that ODEI is hiring a full time education director, whose responsibilities will encompass this role.

Budget and Financial Support

Visitors from a variety of campus organizations shared concerns about how their units and organizations had received a diminished budget with limited transparency behind the reasoning for the cutbacks on campus. While many heard that the fundraising had exceeded the plans in recent times, the pinch of financial cutbacks has become a reality that has not helped create a more positive work environment. People are concerned about loss of employment and trying to find ways to maintain services when staffing has been greatly reduced. Visitors asked for transparency when budgetary cuts are planned as early as possible so that offices can plan ahead for such significant impacts and changes.

Annual Goals

The Ombuds team established goals for the 2021-2022 academic year. The following are this year's goals and progress to date.

Continuing Outreach

The Ombuds team has weekly meetings and plans marketing meetings with 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 training as well as brief meetings with students, faculty, and staff in the upcoming semester. The Ombuds used the 2020-2021 academic calendar to continue building on existing relationships by attending Brandeis events by Zoom, holding virtual meetings to continue promoting our services, and partnering with other offices that serve the Brandeis community. We will continue to attempt to make briefings to larger student groups and classes during the upcoming fall semester. The Ombuds Office has worked with Human Resources in creating a video introduction of the Ombuds Office for all new employees during the onboarding process. We have worked with student orientation organizers to inform all new and transfer students about Ombuds services. To date: We will continue to engage in and expand our outreach activities in the next academic year.

Ongoing Service/Program Evaluation

The Ombuds Office is committed to continuous improvement to ensure we are operating efficiently and effectively as a unit. We have been using a confidential visitor feedback survey to inform and strengthen our practices and services in support of the community. To date: We have developed and use a voluntary, anonymous visitor feedback form that offers the office feedback information on what is working and areas for review and potential changes that should be considered. Information shared has been very positive, with limited issues, all relating to a desire for more opportunities for meetings in a very quick turnaround time period.

Increased Service to the Campus Community

We have 4 goals we are working to accomplish in order to enhance the services we offer to all members of the Brandeis Community.

1. We plan to continue with scheduling of meetings remotely by Zoom, phone, and in person. Visitors can make an appointment by emailing brandeisOmbuds@Brandeis.edu or calling **781-736-2265**. We prioritize scheduling visitor meetings when it is most convenient for the visitor and fits within our availability. We will continue to offer Ombuds meetings in person, by Zoom, and by phone during the upcoming year. We are not an emergency service, and although it is our practice to return all contacts within a day of a visitor asking for support, we are sometimes unable to meet with a visitor for a week or longer due to our limited team availability.
2. With one full time and two on-call (part-time) Ombuds on staff presently, we'd like to add more hours to our part-time Ombuds so that we are better able to meet with visitors in a more timely manner. This coming year we hope to grow our staff availability so we have more time to meet with visitors.
3. We are developing an array of self-help materials for our website on communication, conflict resolution, self-care, harassment and bullying, and discrimination. We have been circulating materials and resources to visitors as they reach out for support. To date: This goal has been completed and will continue to be expanded upon in the next year.
4. We have implemented offering informal conflict resolution services to individuals and groups as well as facilitating community discussions and supporting groups/teams in establishing guiding principles/norms as well as facilitating restorative justice listening circles as neutrals. To date: This goal has been accomplished, and these services will continue to be offered in the coming year.

The number and diversity of visitors who have contacted the office, as well as the range of issues that have been shared with us, underscore the necessity of the Ombuds Office. Our primary goal continues to be to serve the whole community in ways that are needed, desired and supportive for community growth in hopes of making Brandeis University a **healthier, more compassionate, respectful, diverse, and productive community**.

Current State of Ombuds Office

Ombuds Office Team

Three Ombuds currently (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022) 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 having an affiliation with Brandeis. Our seasoned Ombuds team includes [Don Greenstein](#), a reformed lawyer, who brings over 32 years of conflict resolution process and education experience. [Esther Lin](#), who joined us in August of 2021, comes to the Brandeis community with mediation and international experience. Her diverse language skills (English, Korean, and some background in Chinese) add

value to our team. Esther has been a wonderful new addition welcomed by the community as a whole in who she is and how she shows up in the community.

Two years ago (Feb. 2020), we welcomed a new Ombuds, [Mike Rozinsky](#), who brings over 22 years of organizational development, conflict management, and change readiness and management experience to our team. Mike has added terrific value to the team as a facilitator and experienced ombuds. He has led a number of team building and mission and goal setting sessions for various offices all over campus, as well as met with a number of new and repeat visitors to the Ombuds Office. Mike has grown quickly to understand the unique policies at Brandeis and helps visitors find appropriate ways to resolve differences and concerns.

The Ombuds Office is a campus resource that serves as an outlet to process any type of challenging situation, a bridge to navigate campus resources, and to serve as a coach to help, support, and empower community members, offices, and teams.

Outreach

We changed from an [Ombuds Charter](#) to a University Ombuds Policy. The Brandeis Policy Review Committee has discussed, reviewed, and approved a [Brandeis Ombuds Policy](#) in collaboration with the General Counsel and the Diversity Officer to more appropriately reflect our work and to identify our standards of practice in a transparent policy agreement with the entire University community and all visitors who may use the office. It was approved by University President Ron Liebowitz and is posted on the Ombuds website.

Other outreach activities continue to focus on sharing more about our services, engaging in more guiding principles/norms workshops, offering trainings on conflict management and difficult conversations, organizing diverse orientation opportunities, developing new online and hard copy marketing materials, updating our website, revising the team marketing video, and fostering collaborative relationships with other service providers all over campus. The Ombuds Office continues to facilitate staff and faculty meetings, workshops, and retreats as neutrals. We also spend time meeting with offices and campus groups/organizations marketing what we do and how we work with individuals and groups. Meetings frequently occur with deans, faculty, senior vice presidents, student union and faculty leadership, office leaders and directors, BUSAC leaders and representatives, and other key campus stakeholders.

COVID-19: Shifts in Ombuds Office Services & Community Support

The Ombuds Office adjusted its operations during the Spring 2020 semester. With the onset of COVID-19 we shifted our campus operations in March 2020. The University itself has seen changes to university policy, professional expectations, and changes in our communication and interpersonal engagement with our office visitors with social and physical distancing. The office has been faced with moving off campus and shifting visitor meetings online using Zoom, phone, and off campus face-to-face (socially distanced) meetings. We expanded our appointment making capabilities by allowing our visitors to schedule appointments online. Ombuds have also played a key role in meeting the needs of visitors who are experiencing conflicts related to COVID-19. Prior to that time, the team was having visitors in the office with concerns related to the public health crisis that has made the Ombuds team consider how best to support the Brandeis community amid these worldly concerns.

We have continued our ongoing efforts to inform the campus community about our availability by sending email outreach to our campus partners across campus, updating our website, publicizing

our contact information by marketing meetings via Zoom with diverse organizations throughout the Brandeis community, and using online communication mechanisms to bolster our support of students through intentional collaboration with student clubs and organizations. We are working with staff and faculty in a similar manner by attempting to meet and market our services online at staff and office meetings, with office directors, organization faculty/staff meetings, and team leadership. The Ombuds Director meets bi-weekly or monthly with various campus leaders and is open to meeting with anyone who desires a meeting to learn more or have any discussion about how the Office works and serves the community as a whole. We are continually evaluating our services and support as circumstances related to COVID-19 evolve, as well as any other concern or issue.

We are treating the non-reporting of COVID-19 as an imminent threat to others on campus. If a visitor shares with any of the team that they have been exposed or diagnosed with the Coronavirus, and returned to campus without reporting it to the Brandeis Health Director, we are urging them to do so. If they choose not to, we view this as a major concern and imminent health threat, so the Ombuds with notice is viewing this as a reason to breach confidentiality. This is being explained to all visitors at the outset of their visit as well as if it is shared during a meeting.

Goals and Next Steps

Office Expansion

The Ombuds Office has been in existence since 2015 for students and since 2017 for the entire community. The staff has grown from 3 collateral duty personnel serving students only to one full time director and two individuals who work up to 8 hours a week. The use of the office continues to increase and will undoubtedly continue to increase in the coming years. In order for the Ombuds Office team to meet the needs of the community and be timely responsive to all visitors, the leadership needs to be considering ways to grow and support the success of this office. The present budget and staffing is inadequate to continue to meet the community's needs and requests for services. The Director and the entire team need to be able to be available without being overstretched. The community feedback and use of this office speaks for itself on the need for an efficient operation that can be available to meet the community needs. The Ombuds team needs to be made up of diverse individuals who are available to the community in an efficient and effective manner. It would be appropriate to have more diversity as well as language skills that meet the needs of those who visit the office.

Continuing Outreach

The Ombuds Team has been meeting regularly and planning marketing and fall orientation meetings with all major offices and constituent groups within the university community. The Team will continue to schedule and meet with offices and groups online, including those we have previously met with to keep connections and marketing efforts open to everyone at Brandeis who might have a need to use the Ombuds Office. The Office had been scheduling presentations in all first year and graduate school programs. The goal of these marketing efforts is to inform staff, students, and faculty early and often about the Ombuds Office, and how it can support them during their studies and time at Brandeis. The Team will continue to schedule meetings with various staff and faculty offices around the Brandeis community in hopes of keeping the office in the minds of all Brandeis community members.

The focus for the coming Fall 2022-2023 semester is on the upcoming orientations and the return to campus for new and rising 2nd year undergrad and grad students (faculty and staff also) who have never been on the Brandeis campus.

Plans for the Upcoming Academic Year

The Ombuds will continue to work with all visitors in person, virtually by Zoom or phone with online open office hours for scheduling 5 days a week, Monday-Friday. Online difficult conversations, self-care, marketing, training, RJ listening circles and establishing guiding principles for more positive workplace environments are available to all campus offices and groups during these ever changing, physically isolating, and return-to-the-“next normal” times. The Ombuds Office continues to promote our services and partner with campus offices that serve the entire Brandeis community. We are available presently for in person meetings on or off campus if such is desired, following campus, Massachusetts, and CDC COVID-19 guidelines.

We are an outlet to process any type of challenging situation, a place to turn when an individual has no idea where to go, a bridge to navigate campus resources, a resource to educate about and facilitate difficult/challenging conversations, and a coach to help, support, and empower anyone affiliated with the Brandeis community. Our goal is to serve the community as a whole in ways that are needed, desired, and supportive for community growth, advocacy of fair process, and inclusiveness.

Appendix A – Tabular View of Charts within the Report

Table View of Chart 1: Total Visits from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022

Total Number of Visits	FY 2019-2020	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022	Total
<i>Total Number of Visits</i>	209	288	296	793

Table View of Chart 2: Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022

Percentage of Number of Sessions with Visitors by Number of Sessions	FY 2019-2020	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions with Visitors with 1 Session</i>	36%	42%	61%
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions with Visitors with 2 Sessions</i>	34%	23%	18%
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions with Visitors with 3 or More Sessions</i>	30%	34%	21%

Table View of Chart 3: Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022

Percentage of Mix of Time Spent with Visitors	FY 2019-2020	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent with Visitors of 1 Hour or Less</i>	51%	65%	67%
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent with Visitors of Between 1 and 2 Hours</i>	23%	32%	30%
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent with Visitors of 2 Hours or More</i>	26%	2%	3%

Table View of Chart 4: Percentage of Visitor Populations from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022

Percentage of Visitor Populations	FY 2019-2020	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022
<i>Percentage of Students</i>	36%	40%	23%
<i>Percentage of Faculty</i>	10%	10%	16%
<i>Percentage of Staff</i>	49%	46%	58%
<i>Percentage of Alumni</i>	1%	0%	1%
<i>Percentage of Other</i>	3%	4%	3%

Table View of Chart 5: Percentage of Primary Issues across Visits from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022

Percentage of Total Visits	FY 2019-2020	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022
<i>Personal (health, family, self)</i>	11%	14%	15%
<i>Interpersonal (peer-to-peer personal issue)</i>	10%	7%	12%
<i>Education (related to faculty, students, classroom)</i>	13%	21%	14%
<i>Employment (job-related)</i>	30%	21%	30%
<i>COVID-19</i>	7%	13%	5%
<i>Diversity and Inclusion</i>	11%	14%	19%
<i>Other</i>	19%	10%	6%

Table View of Chart 6: Percentage of Referrals Fiscal Year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022

Percentage of Referrals	FY 2019-2020	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022
<i>Campus Police</i>	2%	1%	1%
<i>Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion</i>	12%	11%	17%
<i>Office of Equal Opportunity</i>	12%	14%	17%
<i>Counseling Center</i>	6%	7%	4%
<i>Dean - Academic</i>	14%	17%	7%
<i>Disabilities Services</i>	2%	2%	1%
<i>Employee Assistance Program</i>	8%	7%	9%
<i>Facilities</i>	1%	1%	1%
<i>Gender and Sexuality Center</i>	1%	1%	1%
<i>Health Service</i>	2%	2%	1%
<i>Human Resources</i>	10%	11%	16%
<i>Intercultural Center</i>	2%	2%	1%
<i>International Students/Scholars Office</i>	3%	2%	2%
<i>PARC/Prevention, Advocacy & Resource Center</i>	1%	2%	1%
<i>Provost</i>	8%	6%	5%
<i>Office of Spiritual Life</i>	1%	2%	1%
<i>Other</i>	15%	11%	14%

Appendix B – Other Issues Handled by Ombuds

International travel issues

COVID-19 testing and returning to campus concerns

Bias related issues

Boundary issues (e.g., administrative staff asked to handle issues outside their Brandeis work)

Disability education plans / ADA compliance concerns

Issues with the Accessibility Office, policies, and practices

Facility issues; health and food concerns

Informal conflict resolution with individuals to discuss workplace conflict

Landlord/tenant issues – off campus (tenant and subleasing, unhealthy living conditions, terms of lease, etc.)

Roommates' co-housing concerns

Facilitations of office team conversations

Publication concerns; not receiving credit for work done

Individuals considering whether to leave or stay at Brandeis based on workplace treatment and desire to find healthier, more respectful place of work

Questions regarding policies and application to personal situations, as well as consequences for failing to follow policies of which individuals were unaware

Mental health issues and accessibility concerns regarding treatment by different campus offices

Appendix C – Other Referrals

Care Team

Career Counselors (Outside resource)

Chief Financial Officer

General Counsel

Waltham Group

Community Housing Mediation (Outside resource)

Waltham Clerk of Court (Small claims action)

Department of Community Living

Graduate Student Services

Maria Madison, Heller School Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Restorative Justice Circle Facilitators

Student Conduct Board

Waltham Health Department

Mediation Programs affiliated with Suffolk Law School, Boston University, New England School of Law, Boston College, and Harvard Law School