

# Brandeis University Ombuds

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

## Fall Semester Report: August-December 2021

This Fall 2021 semester report includes trends and considerations stemming from voluntary visitors to the Ombuds Office. The report includes data from the Fall Semester 2020 (August-December), Spring Semester 2021 (January-May), Summer Session 2021 (June-July), and the Fall Semester 2021 (August-December).

Ombuds Office reports are posted on the [Ombuds Office website](#), and this is the second semester report as we continue to evolve our reporting cadence and information. Subsequent reports will continue to be released on a semesterly basis, and our annual report will be released at the end of the Summer. Historically, the Ombuds Office had been reporting on a fiscal quarterly and annual year basis starting in 2018.

## Quick Links to Trends, Highlights & Consideration

- [Total Visits](#)
- [Total Visitors](#)
- [Time Spent with Visitors](#)
- [Mix of Number of Sessions with Visitors](#)
- [Mix of Time Spent](#)
- [Mix of Visitor Populations](#)
- [Primary Issues](#)

## Current Ombuds Office Team

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.

The Ombuds 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. The current Ombuds team includes [Don Greenstein](#), [Esther Lin](#), and [Mike Rozinsky](#).

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about our standards of practice of confidentiality, impartiality, informality, and independence in the [Policy Statement](#) on the Brandeis Ombuds Office. The Ombuds are not mandatory reporters, nor an office of notice for Brandeis University. This makes the Ombuds Office a good place to start when you don't know where to go or when you have experienced something, and you want an informal space to explore your options before you potentially involve others.

## Contact Us

For information on how to schedule appointments, ways we work with visitors, and access our online resources, visit our [website](#) or call the confidential Ombuds office phone line 781.736.2265. We are available to meet with visitors remotely by phone, Zoom, or in person with social distancing at a time that works best for the individual. At this time please schedule an appointment by emailing [brandeisombuds@brandeis.edu](mailto:brandeisombuds@brandeis.edu) to meet with an Ombuds. You may request a specific individual or one will be assigned to contact you. Visiting the Ombuds office is always voluntary, and each visitor may choose which Ombuds they would like to meet.

## Updates to Reporting

The Ombuds Office views reporting as adaptive, and we plan to continue to update the format of our reporting in order to further the understanding and identification of opportunities for constructive change and information sharing across the Brandeis community. As such, this information is shared with the University Leadership and across the campus community to encourage institutional change and fair practice throughout Brandeis University.

Beginning in the Spring Semester 2022, the Ombuds Office has shifted to self-identification for both gender and race/ethnicity of visitors, so we will not include reporting from prior semesters in this semester report. In prior reports the related charts represented how visitors either self-identified and were noted by an Ombuds or were identified and noted by an Ombuds.

## Defining “Trends”

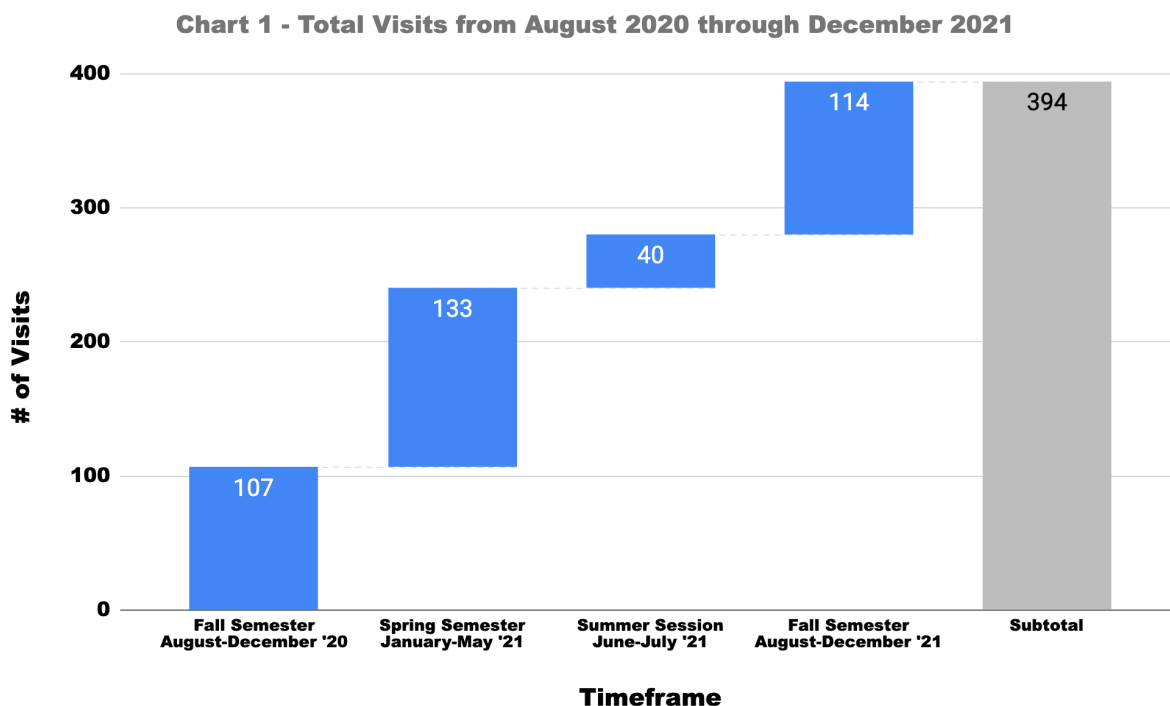
“Trends” are informed by our data and the topics and issues raised voluntarily by visitors during visits which we believe either signal the need and/or present an opportunity for intervention or action by campus leadership and the Brandeis community. Individual issues become “trends” when we recognize that multiple visitors from one or more offices, departments, or schools throughout the University community are visiting us about the same problem/topic/concern.

## Trends, Highlights, & Considerations

From August 2020 through December 2021, the Ombuds Office hosted 394 visits with 555 visitors over a total of 395.5 hours.

In the same period 57% of the visitors were returning individuals who have visited the office previously for a different or the same concern. This is positive, meaning people who have used the Ombuds Office in the past feel comfortable returning to discuss their concerns and/or to find appropriate resources and support.

See [Charts 1, 2, and 3](#) for further detail by each semester from August 2020 through December 2021.



Visits in Chart 1 means total unique, or singular, meetings with an Ombuds. These include returning visitor visits. It continues to be apparent that those who visit the Ombuds Office need a place to confidentially share their situation and find resources that can help them through difficult, stressful, and uncertain experiences. [See a tabular view of Chart 1](#)

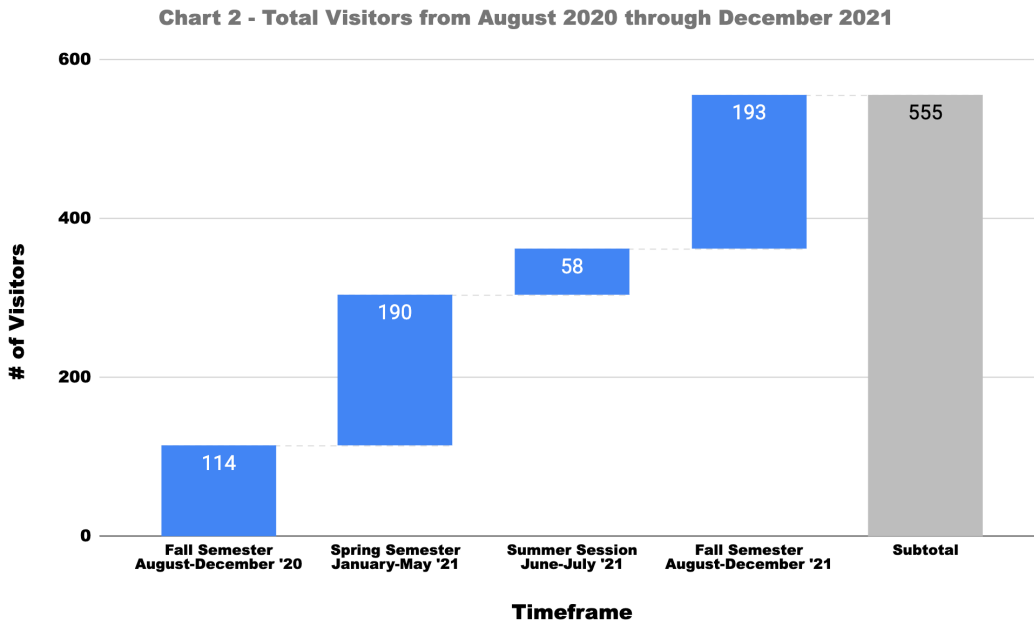


Chart 2 shows the total number of visitors who met with an Ombuds. There are more visitors than visits in each semester ([Chart 1](#)), as an Ombuds may meet with multiple visitors for a facilitated dialogue and other kinds of group work furthering the conflict management capability building across the community. [See a tabular view of Chart 2](#)

The time included in Chart 3 below reflects time spent with visitors helping and supporting their ongoing concerns and issues, as well as identifying resources and individual priorities and goals. It is not inclusive of time by the Ombuds coordinating a visit, reviewing policy, and/or exploring possible options independently from the visitor(s). It also does not include time spent conducting training and informational/marketing sessions or meeting with various leaders and committees across campus to learn about ongoing needs. [See tabular view of Chart 3](#)

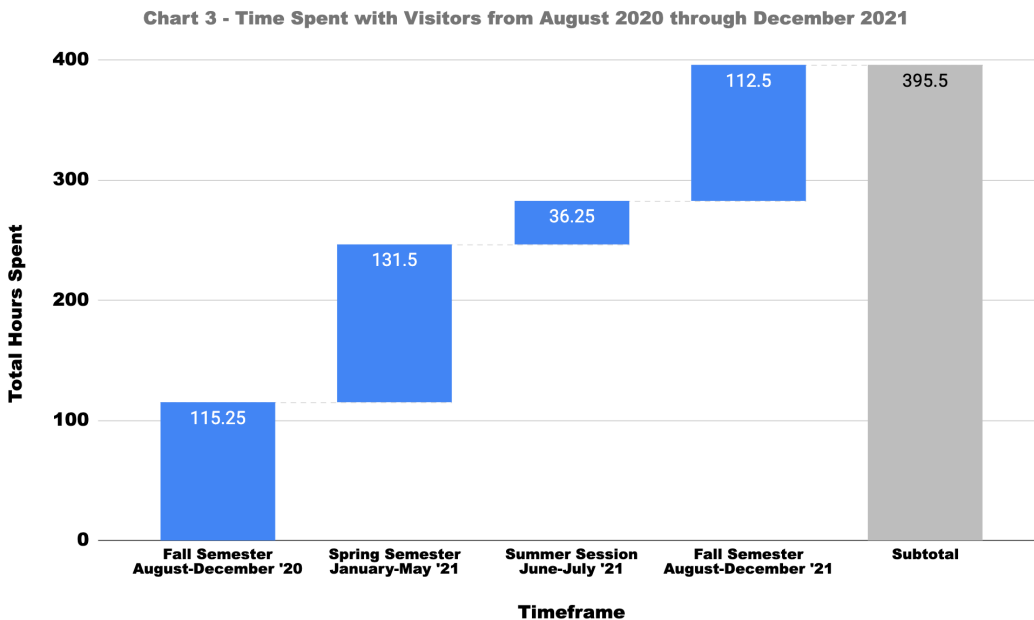
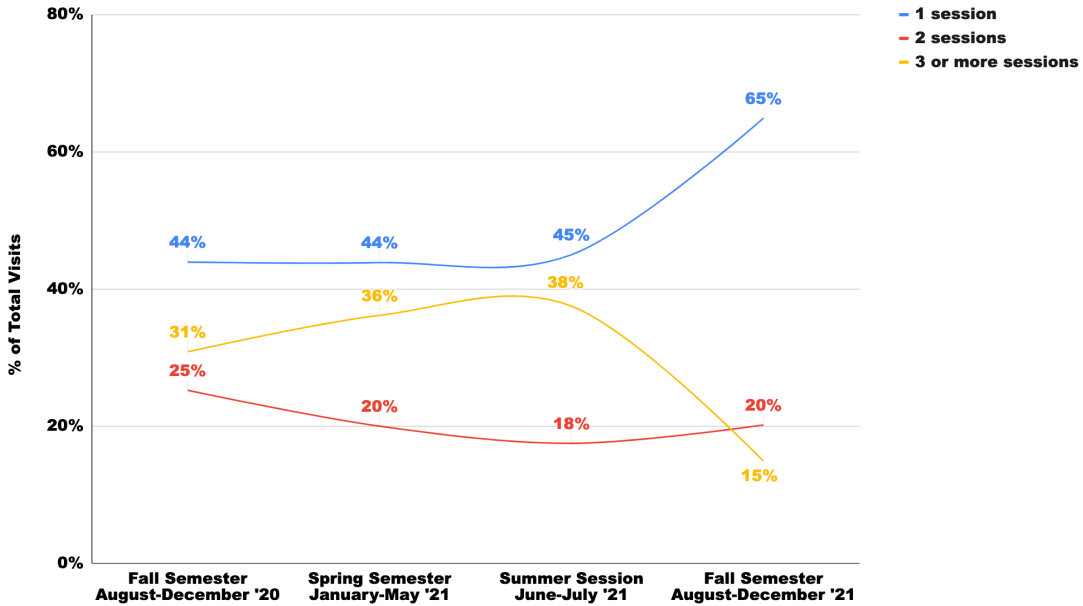
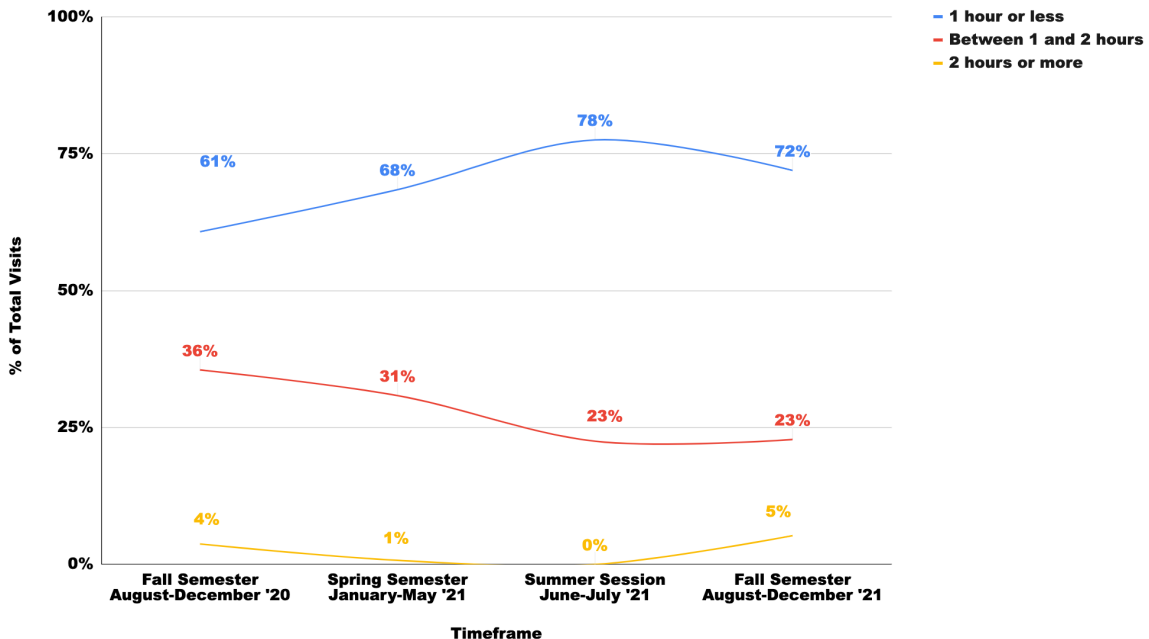


Chart 4 - Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits from August 2020 through December 2021

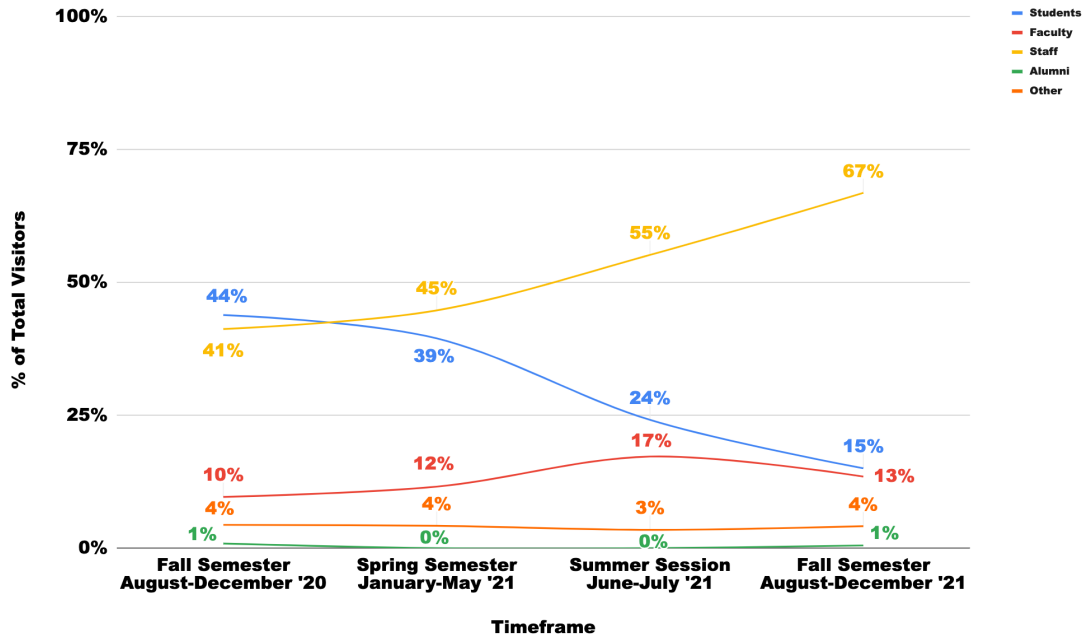


From the Summer Session 2021 through December 2021, it is noted in Chart 4 above that there is currently a shift to one session with visitors. That change from prior semesters is likely related to an increase in visits with staff ([Chart 6](#)) where options for resolution were found through referral or within a visitor’s department once time had been spent considering their options in meeting their needs. The time spent across visits in Chart 5 below has held fairly consistent across semesters. In the Fall Semester 2021, single visits might have been of longer duration working through options and complex issues as well as reflective of group work. [See a tabular view of Chart 4](#); [See a tabular view of Chart 5](#)

Chart 5 - Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits from August 2020 through December 2021



**Chart 6 - Percentage of Visitor Populations from August 2020 through December 2021**



From the Fall Semester 2020, the percentage of Faculty and Staff visitors to the Ombuds has increased by 3% and 26% respectively, while Student (graduate and undergraduate) visitors have decreased by 29% as seen in Chart 6 above.

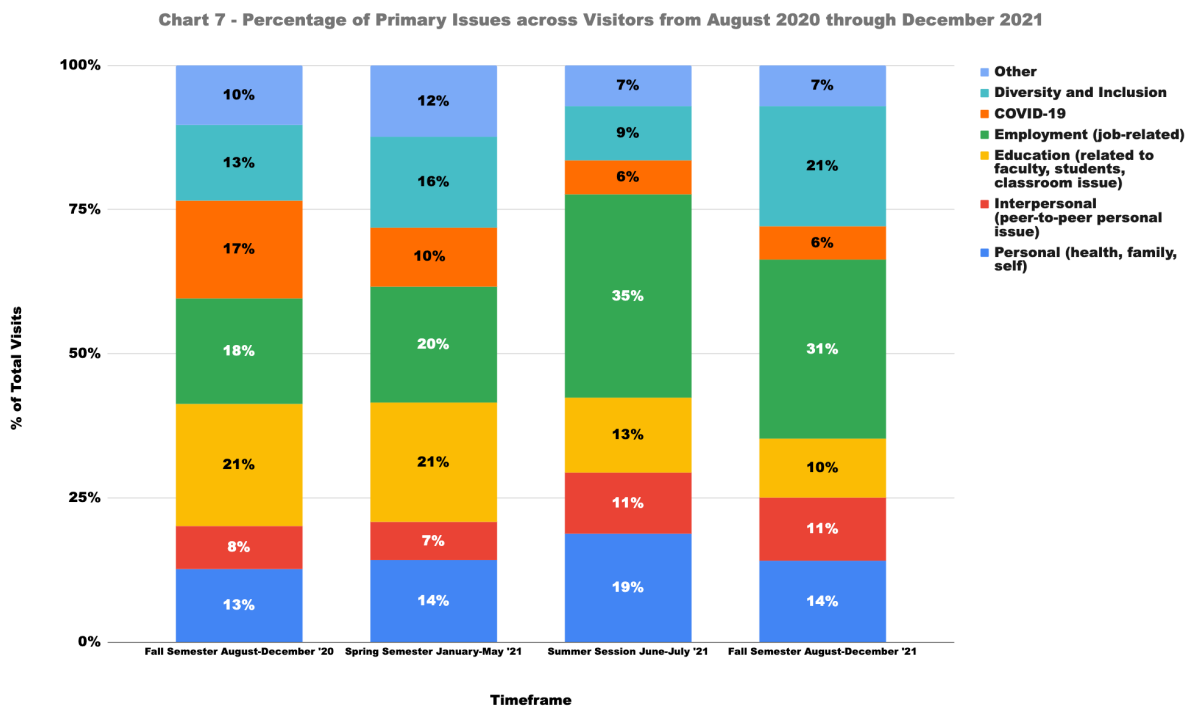
Topics from Staff and Faculty visitors range from procedural fairness, status and positionality, bullying, civility, harassment, discrimination, performance, communication, leadership and management approaches, feedback, civility, stress, self-care, mental health, and ways of working. In the broader context of the pandemic and returning to campus, the topics are a signal and in recognition that Faculty and Staff are being impacted like other higher education communities as well as public, private, and nonprofit organizations. The Brandeis community is not alone in their experience. In this moment, it is an invitation to act to set a course for what we hope to be.

For Student visitors, the decline seems to be a sign that the support services for students are meeting their needs as return to campus continues. The topics present for Student visitors echo those of Staff and Faculty visitors in the day-to-day of navigating their daily lives as people in their roles as students, researchers, workers, and peers in the Brandeis community. [See a tabular view of Chart 6](#)

In general, visitors to the Ombuds Office share more than a single primary issue. The summary in Chart 7 below reflects the percentage of total primary issues and has been aggregated across the visitor groups to the Ombuds Office (Students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Other). The Other category in Chart 7 is inclusive of issues related to those with an association with Brandeis (off-campus housing, neighboring community concern, etc.).

From August 2020 through December 2020, the categories of Diversity and Inclusion, Employment, and Interpersonal are among the main concerns of visitors, while Education issues have significantly decreased. Similar to the mix of visitors to the Ombuds, these patterns in Chart 6, as well as the trends speak to the challenges of the relational aspects of a campus and workplace community.

[See a tabular view of Chart 7](#)



## Appendix – Tabular View of Charts within the Report

Table View of Chart 1: Total Visits from August 2020 through December 2021

<b>Total Number of Visitors</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2020</b>	<b>Spring Semester, January-May 2021</b>	<b>Summer Session, June-July 2021</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2021</b>	<b>August 2020-December 2021</b>
<i>Total Number of Visits</i>	107	133	40	114	394

Table View of Chart 2: Total Visitors across Visits from August 2020 through December 2021

<b>Total Number of Visitors</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2020</b>	<b>Spring Semester, January-May 2021</b>	<b>Summer Session, June-July 2021</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2021</b>	<b>August 2020-December 2021</b>
<i>Total Visitors</i>	114	190	58	193	555

Table View of Chart 3: Total Hours Spent with Visitors across Visits from August 2020 through December 2021

<b>Total Hours Spent with Visitors</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2020</b>	<b>Spring Semester, January-May 2021</b>	<b>Summer Session, June-July 2021</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2021</b>	<b>August 2020-December 2021</b>
<i>Total Hours Spent with Visitors</i>	115.25	131.5	36.25	112.5	395.5



Table View of Chart 4: Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits from August 2020 through December 2021

<b>Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2020</b>	<b>Spring Semester, January-May 2021</b>	<b>Summer Session, June-July 2021</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2021</b>
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits with 1 Session</i>	44%	44%	45%	65%
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits with 2 Sessions</i>	31%	20%	18%	20%
<i>Percentage of Number of Sessions across Visits with 3 or More Sessions</i>	25%	36%	38%	15%

Table View of Chart 5: Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits from August 2020 through December 2021

<b>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent with Visitors</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2020</b>	<b>Spring Semester, January-May 2021</b>	<b>Summer Session, June-July 2021</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2021</b>
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits of Up to 1 Hour</i>	61%	68%	78%	72%
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits of 1-2 Hours</i>	36%	31%	23%	23%
<i>Percentage of Mix of Time Spent across Visits of 2 or More Hours</i>	4%	1%	0%	5%

Table View of Chart 6: Percentage of Visitor Populations from August 2020 through December 2021

<b>Percentage of Visitor Populations</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2020</b>	<b>Spring Semester, January-May 2021</b>	<b>Summer Session, June-July 2021</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2021</b>
<i>Students</i>	44%	39%	24%	15%
<i>Faculty</i>	10%	12%	17%	13%
<i>Staff</i>	41%	45%	55%	67%
<i>Alumni</i>	1%	0%	0%	1%
<i>Other</i>	4%	4%	3%	4%

Table View of Chart 7: Percentage of Primary Visitor Issues across Visits from August 2020 through December 2021

<b>Percentage of Primary Visitor Issues</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2020</b>	<b>Spring Semester, January-May 2021</b>	<b>Summer Session, June-July 2021</b>	<b>Fall Semester, August-December 2021</b>
<i>Other</i>	10%	12%	7%	7%
<i>Diversity and Inclusion</i>	13%	16%	9%	21%
<i>COVID-19</i>	17%	10%	6%	6%
<i>Employment (job-related)</i>	18%	20%	35%	31%
<i>Education (related to faculty, students, classroom issue)</i>	21%	21%	13%	10%
<i>Interpersonal (peer-to-peer personal issue)</i>	8%	7%	11%	11%
<i>Personal (health, family, self)</i>	13%	14%	19%	14%